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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

War on the Poor

\$2.95 Canada \$4.50

www.inthesetimes.com • October 27, 2003

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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 27, No. 24) went to press on September 26 for newsstand sales October 10 to October 31, 2003.

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Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For **subscription questions, address changes and back issues** call (800) 827-0270.

Editorial correspondence and letters should be sent to: 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Phone: (773) 772-0100. Fax: (773) 772-4180.

Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through the IPA International Sales Cooperative at (415) 643-0161, or info@bigtoppubs.com.



Editorial

Free Trade at the Crossroad

The collapse of World Trade Organization talks in Cancun has greatly delayed the negotiations of any new expanded trade agreement. That prospect brought moans from U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, who blamed the result on a clash between "can-do" and "won't-do" countries. It also brought cheers from some anti-globalization groups. There is reason to cheer—but not much. With the delay comes hope that a better deal might emerge for developing countries. It also will be tougher for President George W. Bush to push through his Free Trade Agreement for the Americas when negotiations begin this November in Miami. But delaying the WTO negotiations is not likely to lead to a progressive trade agreement that will reduce inequality, favor farmers and workers, protect the environment, and build genuine popular democracy.

The WTO negotiations stalled, in part, because a bloc of 21 developing countries emerged as a new negotiating force willing to stand up to the United States and the European Union, which typically dominate the organization. The G21, along with other developing countries, resisted the agreement because the rich countries offered too little (particularly an inadequate reduction in their dumping of agricultural products at low prices on the world market) and demanded too much (especially a commitment to negotiate rules governing investment, government procurement, competition and trade facilitation).

This round of trade talks was supposed to bring more fairness to world trade. As even former International Monetary Fund Deputy Director Stanley Fischer admitted, "The world trading system is biased against developing countries." While some developing countries, notably China, have grown rapidly over the past decade, conditions in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia have gotten worse.

Often the successful countries, like China, have prospered by violating the free trade doctrines of the "Washington consensus"—financial openness, privatization, government austerity and low tariffs—that some of the less successful countries have followed more rigorously. Tanzanian Minister of Industry and Trade caught the mood of the dissidents when he asked, "Do you want us to

continue with a multilateral system that does nothing for us?"

At Cancun the United States ignored the demand from four small African countries to stop dumping subsidized cotton on the world market—a practice that depressed the cotton prices their poor farmers are dependent on. According to Oxfam, the United States spends twice as much on its harmful subsidies for cotton exports, mainly for a small number of wealthy Southern farmers, than on aid to sub-Saharan Africa.

Yet simply attacking subsidies for European and American farmers misses the mark. The agricultural systems of rich countries can be reformed both to support reasonable incomes for small farmers and to stop the dumping that undermines world markets. Likewise, encouraging agricultural exports from some developing countries might help them earn hard currencies. But the winners, even in a country like Brazil with its progressive leader, Lula, are likely to be big soybean farmers on former rainforest land and agribusiness corporations employing child laborers in orange groves—not the poor and landless peasants of a group like *Movimiento Sin Tierra*.

Critics of the WTO may be happy that the

'Do you want us to continue with a multilateral system that does nothing for us?'

G21 blocked the rich countries, but are the leaders of these countries really a progressive force or are they simply reflecting the interests of their own elites, much as United States trade representatives represent American multinational corporate interests? Will the G21, for example, fight for labor rights in a global economy when two of its members are Colombia, where more trade unionists are killed each year than in any other nation, and China, where all worker organizing outside the state-controlled union is ruthlessly quashed?

Ultimately, a comprehensive development strategy must expand the social rights and power of the majority of people in each country. To take advantage of the opening at Cancun, it is more important than ever for the labor and environmental movements to forge political ties with progressive forces in developing countries. —David Moberg

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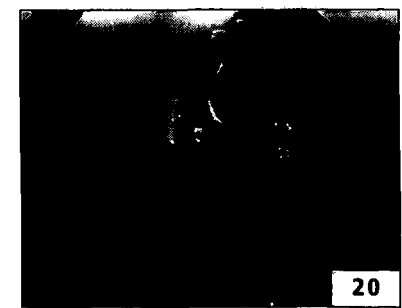
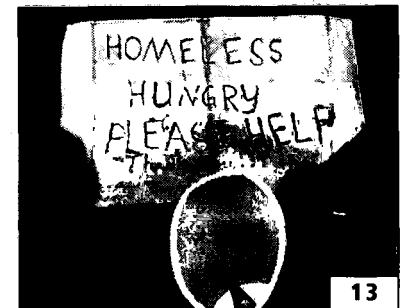
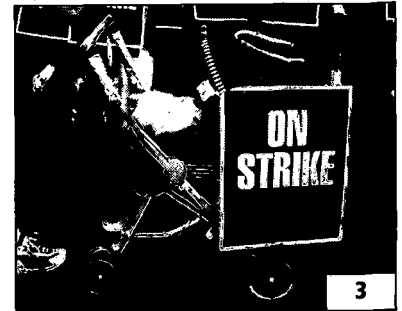
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COVER PHOTO: JOEFF DAVIS / JOEFF.COM

Semper Fi

In reply to Nat Hentoff's "War on the Bill of Rights" (September 29): As a U.S. citizen working abroad and as a two-tour, combat-decorated Marine, I along with my fellow comrades before me and after me have laid their lives on the line to fight for and defend the Constitution of these United States. I find it very disgraceful to see the Constitution cast aside by a group of people who, when the call came to come to the aid of their country, all seemed to have other, more important things to do. Hentoff's article needs to be spread wide and far.

P.J. Goduto
Barcelona

What is it Good For?

Thank you for the profile of Stan Goff and Bring Them Home Now ("Military Families Against the War," September 29). Mr. Goff, you should be on the Defense Policy Board. And the Bush twins should be in Iraq with their butts under fire.

Karen Meador
Auburn, Washington

About Iraq: Since our beef is obviously against foreigners in general, I sure wish we had blown the heck out of Ecuador instead. So many more of our soldiers understand the language which is spoken there.

Kurt Vonnegut
New York

Whose Hero?

It grows more apparent that support for Subcomandante Marcos and his movement is more popular elsewhere than in Mexico ("Biodiversity, Inc." September 15). It is important to note that the life conditions of the Indians in Chiapas have not improved with Marcos; that his idea of everything belongs to the community basically means that nothing belongs to no one; his request for public voting guarantees that everyone will vote the way he or the *caciques* want.

During my recent travels among the Totonacas in Veracruz they had never heard of Marcos and then remembered that he was the nut with the mask. Let's not forget that in a vote most Mexicans said that they wanted him to form a political party. Obviously this would take away most of his appeal among First World countries that love to defend folkloric people as long as they live somewhere else.

Maricarmen Ferrant
Mexico City

Project Censored Recognizes In These Times

Project Censored, a California-based group that compiles the 25 most important stories ignored by the mainstream media each year, has released *Censored 2004*. *In These Times* is once again in the thick of things, with three stories appearing on the list, which contains stories published from 2002-2003.

- #11. "Secret History" by Aaron Porter, September 2, 2002
- #12. "The World isn't Watching: The Forgotten Refugee Crisis" by Daniel Swait, October 12, 2002
- #20. "Bad to Worse" by Neil del Valle, September 2, 2002

All of the stories can be read at www.projectcensored.org or www.inthesetimes.com.

15 Years Ago in In These Times

Also on the *In These Times* Web site is a 1988 article written by Harvey Pekar under a pseudonym. Pekar's comic book *American Splendor* is currently the subject of a film by the same name. The story chronicles Pekar's infamous chastisement of David Letterman on *Late Night*. According to Pekar, Letterman "not only lost his temper, but also his sense of humor."

With this issue we welcome Associate Editor Cynthia Moothart

Cynthia Moothart is a political and grade in Ames, Iowa, when she insisted on buying a Richard Nixon lunch box. She didn't know why he was so hated, but she liked the idea of having a "S" on it. As a result her mother signed her up as a volunteer for the 1972 Democratic Party. She went on to earn a degree in journalism from the University of Iowa and worked as assistant editor of the *Iowa City Press-Register* for several years. She comes to *In These Times* after eight years as a reporter and editor, most recently at the *Des Moines Free Press* and before that the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

Terry LaBan



Yale Buckles

Community alliances key to winning strike

By Melinda Tuhus

Angela Aponte's job at Yale University was to help break a strike. Instead, she and 12 other Latino replacement workers walked off their jobs on September 12, and helped members of Locals 34 and 35 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) win their struggle for higher wages, improved job security and decent pensions. These locals represent Yale's 3,000 clerical and technical workers and 1,100 dining hall and maintenance workers.

Aponte's determination to "fight for something I believe in rather than work for somebody and be a slave, where they disrespect me," boosted HERE's campaign to put Yale on the defensive. The replacement workers' walk-out followed criticism from 25 mostly Hispanic members of Congress that Yale had hired few Hispanic workers before the strike and that its action "set the stage for a racially explosive situation," since the scabs were escorted through a picket line of mostly African-American strikers.

The two HERE locals built a series of alliances with city officials, area clergy, and Yale students, staff and faculty.

National support also played a crucial role. HERE national President John Wilhelm was joined by national presidents of three other unions and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, for a massive "Labor Goes to Yale" rally on September 13. Ten thousand union members and supporters showed up for the rally at which 152 people were arrested for civil disobedience, including all the national labor leaders.

It was clear from day one of this strike that pensions were the top issue. Before a settlement agreement ended the strike that began on August 27, the average pension for those with 20 years or more of service was \$621 a month. The administration claimed that after 30 years at Yale, and factoring in Social Security payments, employees could retire on up to 91 percent of their after-tax income. The unions countered that those num-



Monique Boney, an administrative assistant in the philosophy department, brought 2-year-old Sarah along for the Yale strike.

bers applied to a "mythical worker"—one who requests no survivor benefits, has paid into Social Security from the age of 18, and has contributed to his or her own retirement plan.

The pension issue was highlighted when, on the eve of the strike, five Yale retirees took over the university's investments office and demanded—and after a one-day sleep-in, got—a meeting with David Swenson, the financial guru who has managed to continually increase Yale's endowment, which now stands at \$11 billion. The retirement fund currently has a \$200 million surplus, and protesters respectfully demanded that retirees get a bigger share. They walked out of the office to the cheers and hugs of a thousand union members and students, led by Jesse Jackson Sr., who spent the first week of the strike in New Haven.

In the settlement, union members won wage increases of 3 percent to 5 percent in each year of the contract (the average salary is currently about \$30,000, after a decade of service), better job security, and a new step at the top of the job ladder for clerical and technical workers. They won two-thirds of retroactive wages lost in the past 19 months since their last contracts expired. And all workers got what one union spokesman called a "slam dunk vic-

tory" on pensions, almost doubling the amount that most workers will retire on. Existing benefits will continue, including full coverage of family health insurance, several weeks of paid time off, and help with college tuition and home purchase in certain New Haven neighborhoods.

The Yale administration gained one concession: they pushed to get an eight-year contract, while the locals—whose members approved the contract nearly unanimously—had originally proposed a four-year agreement.

Right up to the final day of the strike, university spokesman Tom Conroy dismissed the office takeover, the rallies and civil disobedience as publicity stunts, and said the unions should worry more about the fact that only half the clerical and technical workers went out on strike.

But that's the way it's always been, ever since Local 34 was organized in 1984. With more than 90 percent of Local 35 members out on strike, the locals had the critical mass they needed—along with financial, physical and moral support from labor around the country—to prevail.

The multi-tiered coalition building in New Haven also is in use elsewhere. HERE President Wilhelm said that building such labor-community coalitions is the only sure path to success. ■

Occupation Cost?

Don't ask Israeli labor

By Dan Levine

Eti Goari is Jewish, 38, wears her hair black with gold highlights, and immediately and enthusiastically declares "cain!" (yes!) when asked if she is a good cook. She has never been blown up while riding a bus. She lives removed from the West Bank in the coastal town of Nahariya, above Haifa—but she is a victim of Israel's occupation of Palestine.

A year ago the boss at a catering company laid off Goari, forcing her and her 10-year-old son on the dole. She received roughly 2,100 shekels per month, she says, or \$470. That fell to about \$337 in June—a 28 percent hit—thanks to draconian budget cuts designed by Ariel Sharon's conservative Finance Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

With the Israeli economy reeling and tax revenues dried up, the Sharon gov-

ernment slashed social services last spring without touching defense spending. Benefits like children's allowances, old-age pensions and income support payments suffered a \$2.3 billion reduction.

As Netanyahu moves forward with his cuts, the Histadrut—Israel's trade union federation—has become the most visible group organizing against them. In April, the union put some 70,000 people onto the streets in protest. Severely weakened in membership and finances over the past decade, the Histadrut's ability to counter this latest assault against Israeli workers will be a test of the organization's strength.

Not only is Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza a human rights horror, it is an enormous drain on the national budget. In 2002, spending on the Israeli security apparatus took 20 percent of the budget, according to the Finance Ministry, and that does not include subsidies for Jewish settlements in Arab territories.

Despite the undeniable connection between the cost of occupation and the social service cuts, the federation's leadership steadfastly refuses to take a politi-

cal position on Palestine. But a faction of Histadrut members are advocating for a strong stand against the occupation in Palestine. While not formally organized, they are not hiding their views and must contend with a leadership that fears splitting its membership, many of whom still vote Sharon's party, Likud, for security reasons.

"When they are inside the room, many [Histadrut] leaders agree," and oppose the occupation, says Jihad Akel, deputy chairman of the Histadrut's Trade Union Department and member of the union's executive committee. "But when they come to the public, they don't have the courage to say it."

The federation offered an alternate budget plan to the one put forth by Netanyahu. Yet nowhere in the plan did the union highlight defense spending. Instead the Histadrut focused on measures like improving collection of value-added taxes on undeclared transactions, Akel says.

Efraim Zilony, chairman of the Histadrut's Economic and Social Authority, says the Histadrut discusses the occupation in economic rather than political terms. "We say [that] we know that sooner or later ... there is a time we shall have to live in peace with the Palestinians," says Zilony, "and we have [to] make great concessions—so why do we have to put money in these territories?"

Zilony is affiliated with Meretz, a political party directly to the left of Labor, while Akel belongs to Hadash, an outgrowth of the Israeli communist party. The Histadrut's general secretary, Amir Peretz, a dove, heads his own left-leaning faction in the Israeli parliament, and the goal of activists like Akel is to push Peretz into a more definitive position from inside the organization.

According to Dan Jacobson, a labor professor at Tel Aviv University, the effort could be aided by Peretz's national ambitions. Peretz has been in negotiations to fold his party and join Labor, perhaps as its leader. In his campaigning Peretz has stuck to workers rights issues, but for him to become a true national leader, he will have to become a multi-dimensional candidate—a shift that may mean taking a definitive position on Palestine.

In the meantime, the Israeli union remains far from a strong voice of dissent on the occupation. ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

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by TOM TOMORROW

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Forests Under Fire

Despite the spin, Bush has no plans for healthy forests

By Jeff Shaw

While President George W. Bush was on the West Coast stumping for environmental votes in August, his forest policy was creating more giant stumps. Besides Bush's high-profile and ironically named "Healthy Forests Initiative," the administration's stealthier pro-logging policies are on the verge of crippling key safeguards for Pacific Northwest old growth.

"The president is taking us back in time to the days of the timber wars," says Jasmine Minbashian of the Northwest Old Growth Campaign. "Never have our forests and salmon been in greater danger."

The administration is proposing to dismantle even the meager protections afforded by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan—with potentially devastating impacts to the region's most fertile repositories of biodiversity.

That plan sets aside 6.9 million acres of national forests west of the Cascade Mountains but allows commercial logging in another 4.6 million acres—including 1.1 million acres containing old growth. This leaves about 14 percent of the ancient trees on federal land vulnerable to industry chainsaws.

The Bush administration is quietly undermining essential forest plan regulations aimed at protecting threatened species and dwindling stands of ancient trees. Two prime examples:

Currently, timber sales must be surveyed for their impact on endangered animals that depend on the older forests. The Bush administration is pushing to overturn this requirement.

Before agencies like the U.S. Forest Service approve a timber sale, they are required to demonstrate that the sale won't harm nearby streams or endangered salmon runs. Under Bush's proposals, this would no longer be a consideration.

These proposed amendments to the Northwest Forest Plan could come out as

early as November in a new environmental impact statement—which bypasses congressional debate. If adopted, timber sales previously declared illegal because of risks to endangered species could reemerge; logging in already sold sensitive areas also would be made easier, quicker and more ecologically harmful.

Because these measures can be adopted through arcane procedures and not a formal vote, they have been mostly hidden from the public. Bush's Healthy Forests Initiative, however, has openly touted lifting environmental regulations as a solution to forest fires. Un-logged forests, the spin goes, provide "fuel" for a wildfire, and logging provides important "fuel reduction."

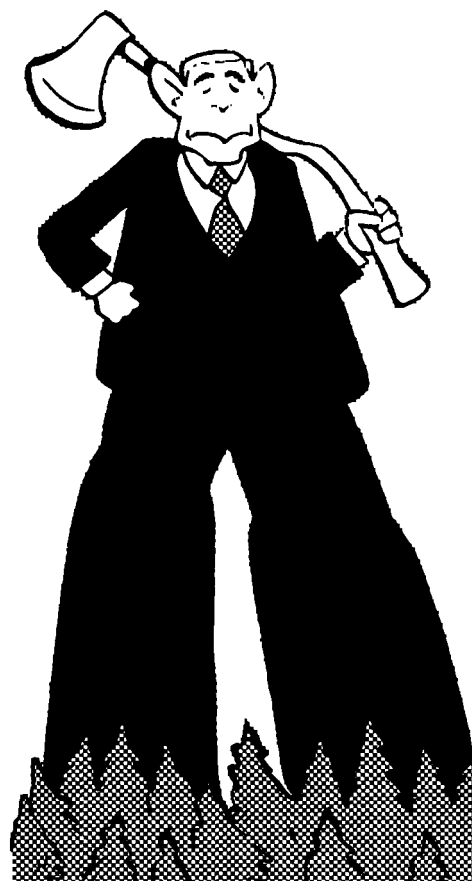
This can be true in some cases for some kinds of forests, but never for old growth. Far from constituting fuel for blazes, the huge trees are the most fire-resistant part of a forest. When mature trees are logged, though, underbrush springs up, increasing an ecosystem's vulnerability to catastrophic wildfires.

"Logging old growth to stop fires is absurd and backwards," says Josh Laughlin, campaign coordinator with the non-profit Cascadia Wildlands Project. "We support authentic fuel reduction, but we stand in the way of ancient forest logging schemes masquerading as fuel reduction."

Why are the so-called "Healthy Forests" policies a masquerade? The wholesale rollback the policies represent—limiting judicial appeals, curtailing environmental studies, bulldozing new roads into wild areas—would make sawing down old growth just as easy as removing the bone-dry underbrush that feeds fires. Harvesting larger old growth trees, though, brings in dramatically more revenue than removing dead saplings. The talk of fuel reduction, many say, provides an excuse for the timber industry to log the profitable giants.

While a July forest fire was raging three miles from the Willamette National Forest's "Clark" timber sale, loggers weren't "reducing fuel" in the Clark sale or surrounding areas—they were toppling old growth 10 miles away at a timber sale called "Straw Devil."

The Straw Devil ecosystem represents what is at stake. When Straw Devil was briefly opened to cutting in late July, pro-



testers occupied trees there, placing their bodies in harm's way to prevent logging of 400-year-old giant cedar and Douglas fir trees. "I watched 4- and 5-foot wide ancient trees coming down," says Laughlin.

Without large firs and cedars, salmon and trout streams lose shade, raising water temperature beyond the threshold fish can tolerate. Felling the trees removes homes for species like the red tree vole, a rodent that only lives under old-growth canopies in Oregon and northern California. If the vole goes, so does a primary food source for the northern spotted owl. The end result could be extinction for signature Pacific Northwest species.

The Straw Devil site contains a crucial vole habitat, a fact documented by activists who painstakingly searched the area for nests. Based on these surveys, a federal judge has temporarily halted timber harvesting at Straw Devil—but the threat to it and other sites is still very real.

And if the Bush administration has its way, no surveys like those will happen again. ■

Trés Cheap

UNITE tangles with anti-labor boutique

By David Moberg

When H&M, the highly successful "cheap chic" Swedish clothing retailer, opened its first Chicago store on fashionable North Michigan Avenue, some things went as planned: Young, attractive clerks dressed in black cheered and danced to music as a long line of youthful customers walked in the door. But H&M hadn't planned on another opening-day feature: a couple hundred protesters, many of them garment workers in red UNITE T-shirts, shouting "no justice, no peace" and carrying posters reading "Abuse is in style at H&M."

UNITE organized the protest at the

opening to bring public pressure to bear on H&M, as it and many other unions often do in their organizing campaigns. They intend to continue a variety of pressure tactics until the company agrees not to interfere with UNITE's efforts to organize, says UNITE senior researcher and organizer Scott Zdrazil. H&M has yet to respond to the union's actions.

H&M is a heavily unionized company throughout Europe with a corporate policy that states "all workers should be free to join associations of their choosing, and they should have the right to bargain collectively." But when 200 employees in its New Jersey distribution center decided in August that they wanted a union, H&M responded like many U.S. corporations, workers and union organizers say: The almost entirely Spanish-speaking, immigrant workforce was forced to sit through anti-union meetings and videos,

received letters outlining how to repudiate their signed union membership cards, and were subjected to closer surveillance.

After eight months on the job, Jose Santos, 21 and wearing a Phat Farm T-shirt, was promoted to full time at the



New Jersey warehouse and supports the union effort. "The company can make us work as much overtime as they want, but there's no fixed schedule," he says. "Part-time people also sometimes work 40 hours, but they don't have the right to medical insurance or any benefits."

He remains "100 percent for the union"

APPALL-O-METER

Can His Ass! 6.0

As far as we know, Daniel Heninger has never used the word nigger in his "Wonder Land" column in the *Wall Street Journal*. Nor, probably, has he used the words spick, kike or chink. But get a load of this excerpt from his September 19 column: "You can either get the benign version of the American superpower, the one that comes with American values, such as a belief in self-determination even for the wogs."

Wait a tick, guv, did you say wog? This word, in British parlance, signifies a dark-skinned subject of the Empire or, more relevantly these days, a dark-skinned immigrant to Britain. It has been applied to blacks, South Asians and most of all to Arabs. It is, for the record, considered as offensive an epithet as any mentioned above.

What was Heninger thinking? More to the point, what were his editors thinking in allowing him to use this word? A sensitive reading

of Heninger's column will find no hint of an ironic context for his word choice. He quite simply meant to offend Arabs.

Jack-booted thugs of political correctness, do your thing!

Dewey Cheat 'Em? 1.3

New York's Library Hotel is a luxury hotel with a difference. It's packed with books, for one thing, and the floors and room numbers mimic the call numbers of the Dewey Decimal System. Very precious indeed, especially since the Library Hotel overlooks the New York Public Library.

Unfortunately, the Online Computer Library Center doesn't think the idea's so cute. According to *Newsday*, the OCLC, a nonprofit organization, is suing the hotel for trademark infringement. It owns the Dewey Decimal System, you see, and it argues that a tragic misunderstanding is being foisted on an unsuspecting public. "A person who came to their Web

site and looked at the way (the hotel) is promoted and marketed would think they were passing themselves off as connected with the owner of the Dewey Decimal Classification system," said Joseph R. Dreitler, a lawyer for the center.

At the moment, the OCLC's complaint in a U.S. District Court seeks triple the hotel's profits since it opened in 2000, but its lawyers say they're open to a settlement. "We're not interested in putting the hotel out of business," Dreitler said.

Hold That Tiger 3.2

Our boys in Iraq continue to set a towering example for the budding democracy they are there to midwife. According to

Agence France-Presse, a handful of drunken soldiers were blowing off a little steam one evening in the Bagdad Zoo when one of them decided to bust a little Siegfried-and-Roy act for his pals. He entered the cage of the zoo's prized Bengal tiger and attempted to feed it. The tiger took this humanitarian gesture the wrong way and clamped his choppers on the G.I.'s arm, severing a finger. Thereupon, one of the soldier's companions shot and killed the ungrateful beast.



TERRY LABAN

despite the company's attempts to divide stronger union supporters from the less resolute. "The company actually has been trying to convince us we don't need a union," he says. "Now they're smiling, but before it was, 'Do this or we'll show you the door.'"

Carmen Duran, a 36-year-old single mother who started with the company part time, sought to boost her hours in part so she would be eligible for health insurance. The Bronx, N.Y., woman is working full time now but still can't afford coverage because it costs around \$250 a month, roughly one-fourth of her income. She's also upset at the lack of a fixed schedule, which makes it difficult for her to care for her two teenage children. "There's a lot of abuse," she says. "The schedule is ridiculous." And with the organizing campaign, she now complains about being closely watched by supervisors.

Inside the Chicago store, H&M spokes-

woman Karen Belva, in an elegant black pantsuit and heels, insisted that the company recognizes the rights of the protesters and for workers to organize. "They have every right to organize," she says. "We don't have an anti-union policy." But the company's attitude in these areas isn't so clear. Last May, managers at PT Kahatex Sweater in Indonesia, which makes clothes for many European and American retailers including H&M, locked out 537 employees who refused to accept wages below the legal minimum, and two leaders were arrested. Many workers have yet to receive severance packages they were pressured to accept.

UNITE has begun signing up members at H&M's seven retail stores in New York, where the union historically represented retail clothing and drug store workers but has not organized in many years. While enjoying a trendy work environment, H&M retail workers start at minimum

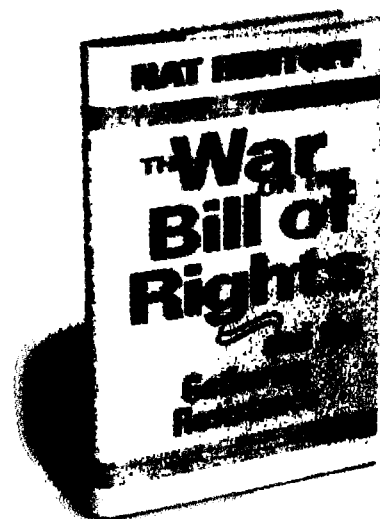
wage, less than those who work in the distribution centers.

The effort to organize retail workers is new for UNITE, which has concentrated on commercial laundries and distribution centers related to its historic base of apparel and textile manufacturers. These manufacturers have been heavily hit by imports from low-wage companies, mainly as part of sourcing strategies by big retailers like H&M. "As the industry is controlled more by retailers, it is critical in order to represent workers in distribution and production to influence the primary retailer," Zdrazil says.

The union also is appealing to Swedish unions to pressure H&M management to recognize UNITE. "What's exciting is we are linking workers who sew clothes, ship clothes and sell clothes," says organizer Mary Kay Devine. "We're working on the street and going on a global scale. Companies are going global. So is UNITE." ■



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THE FIRST TO

By Joel Bleifuss

The Anti-war General?

When Michael Moore had the temerity to suggest at the Oscars that we were being led into war for "fictitious reasons," Gen. Wesley Clark was one of the only people to defend him on national television. Before Clark declared his candidacy for president, Michael Moore sent a letter to Clark encouraging him to run:

This is war, General, and it's Bush & Co.'s war on us. It's their war on the middle class, the poor, the environment, their war on women and their war against anyone around the world who doesn't accept total American domination. Yes, it's a war—and we, the people, need a general to beat back those who have abused our Constitution and our basic sense of decency. The General vs. the Texas Air National Guard deserter! I want to see that debate, and I know who the winner is going to be. ... I am sure there are things you and I don't see eye to eye on, but now is the time for all good people from the far left to the middle of the road to bury the damn hatchet and get together behind someone who is not only good on the issues but can beat George W. Bush. ... Yes, your country needs you to perform one more act of brave service—to help defeat an enemy from within, at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, an address that used to belong to "we, the people."

Moore thanked Clark for "standing up ... for all the millions who were opposed to the war but had been bullied into silence." Yet how silent was Clark? In an April 10 column in the *Times* of London, Clark wrote: "Liberation is at hand. Liberation—the powerful balm that justifies painful sac-



Card sharks? *Human Events*, the conservative weekly, joins the pack.

rifice, erases lingering doubt and reinforces bold actions. ... [President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair] should be proud of their resolve in the face of so much doubt. Their opponents, those who questioned the necessity or wisdom of the operation, are temporarily silent, but probably unconvinced."

The next day, in a second column in the *Times*, Clark wrote: "The campaign in Iraq illustrates the continuing progress of military technology and tactics, but if there is a single overriding lesson it must be this: American military power, especially when buttressed by Britain's, is virtually unchallengeable today. Take us on? Don't try! And that's not hubris, it's just plain fact."

As Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting observed, "to label a candidate with such views 'anti-war' is to render the term meaningless."

But that appears to be the intent of the spin masters of the Clinton political machine. The Clintons have lined up behind Clark in an effort to derail

Howard Dean's candidacy, which threatens both their influence in the Democratic Party and whatever presidential aspirations Hillary has. *Newsweek's* Howard Fineman put it this way: Clark is a candidate who "is as anti-war as Dean" and therefore a "credible alternative" to a candidate whom "many Democrats" (read Democratic Leadership Council members) think "would lead to a disaster."

Second Thoughts

On CNBC's *Topic A With Tina Brown*, Brown asked CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour if "we in the media, as much as in the administration, drank the Kool-Aid when it came to the war?" Amanpour replied:

I think the press was muzzled, and I think the press self-muzzled. I'm sorry to say, but certainly television and, perhaps, to a certain extent, my station was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox News. And it did,

in fact, put a climate of fear and self-censorship, in my view, in terms of the kind of broadcast work we did. ... It's not a question of couldn't do it, it's a question of tone. It's a question of being rigorous. It's really a question of really asking the questions. All of the entire body politic in my view, whether it's the administration, the intelligence, the journalists, whoever, did not ask enough questions, for instance, about weapons of mass destruction. I mean, it looks like this was disinformation at the highest levels.

"All of the entire body politic"? Not quite. In *These Times* and other members of the independent press didn't buy the administration's disinformation from the get-go.

It is nice to see many in the mainstream media questioning whether their professionalism was compromised, but questions remain. Why were they so easily duped? And could it happen again?

It will if Fox News has its way. Brooking no criticism of her network's jingoism, Fox spokeswoman Irena Briganti said, "Given the choice, it's better to be viewed as a foot soldier for Bush than a spokeswoman for al-Qaeda."

Playing in Peoria

Tim Predmore, with the Army's 101st Airborne Division based near Mosul, Iraq, sent his take on the war to his hometown paper, the *Peoria Journal Star*. He wrote in part:

Was this invasion because of weapons of mass destruction, as we have so often heard. If so, where are they? ... Or is it that our incursion is about our own economic advantage? Iraq's oil can be refined at the lowest cost of any in the world. This looks like a modern-day crusade not to free an oppressed people or to rid the world of a demonic dictator relentless in his pursuit of conquest and domination, but a crusade to control another nation's natural resource. ... I once believed that I was serving for a cause—"to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States." Now I no longer believe that; I have lost my conviction, as well as my determination. I can no longer justify my service on the basis of what I believe to be half-truths and bold lies. ... We have all faced death in Iraq without reason and without justification. How many more

must die? How many more tears must be shed before Americans awake and demand the return of the men and women whose job it is to protect them rather than their leader's interest?

One Leader's Interest

"I have no financial interest in Halliburton of any kind and haven't had now for over three years," the former head of Halliburton, Vice President Dick Cheney, said on September 14. Cheney's current financial disclosure form shows that he holds 433,333 Halliburton stock options and will be receiving \$150,000 a year in deferred compensation through 2005. Halliburton stands to make billions in Pentagon contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq. In March, for example, the Army Corps of Engineers awarded the company a no-bid contract, with a \$7 billion limit, to put out fires at Iraqi oil wells. As a result of such government contracts, the value of Halliburton stock has risen by 50 percent in the past year.

Nazi, Schmazi

According to Italian President Silvio Berlusconi, Benito Mussolini was not such a bad guy. "Mussolini never killed anyone," he said in an interview with *The Spectator*, a conservative U.K. weekly. "Mussolini sent people on holiday to confine them [banishment to small islands such as Ponza and Maddalena which are now plush resorts]." Berlusconi failed to mention that Mussolini also sent people, mostly Italian Jews, on holiday to Germany. But bygones are bygones. That's the spirit at the Anti-Defamation League, which on September 23 honored Berlusconi with its Distinguished Statesman Award for his support of Israel. "He's a good friend," said Abraham Foxman, the group's national director.

Family Values

U.S. Customs and Immigration officers have refused entry into the United States by Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell, the first gay couple to be legally married in Canada. On September 18, at Toronto's Pearson

International Airport, the couple filled out a U.S. Customs and Immigration form identifying themselves as a family. Under U.S. law, families may fill out a single form. But because the United States does not recognize same-sex marriage, Customs officials said the couple could enter the United States only if the two filled out individual forms. Bourassa and Varnell refused. "We could have filled out separate forms, but how much of your dignity do you want to have to chip away?" said Bourassa. The two men hired a lawyer, foregoing their trip to Braselton, Georgia, where they were to speak at a human rights conference at which Corretta Scott King also was to appear.

Who Ndees Speling?

Aoccdrnig to a rserceearh at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttear in waht oder the lteetrs in a wrod are, the only ipmrotn tnhg is taht the frist and lsat ltteres be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a tatol mses and you can siltl raed it wothuit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the hmaun mnid deos not raed ervey lterer by istlef but the wrod as a wlohe. ■

Spiritual Safety Tip

What should you do if you find an Atheist?

Bah! I don't believe in anything! I'm staying home on Sunday!

If you find an Atheist in your neighborhood, TELL A PARENT OR PASTOR RIGHT AWAY!

You may be moved to try and witness to these poor lost souls yourself, however **AVOID TALKING TO THEM!**

Atheists are often very grumpy and bitter and will lash out at children or they may even try to trick you into neglecting God's Word.

Very advanced witnessing techniques are needed for these people. Let the adults handle them.

This Godless world is fraught with danger, according to <http://objective.jesussave.us/kidz.html>.

It's Not Sleazy. It's HBO.

By Craig Aaron

Lobbyists have finally arrived. Washington—or at least the *Roll Call*—reading classes that traffic in inside-the-Beltway inside baseball—is abuzz over *K Street*, the new quasi-reality series on influence-peddling produced by George Clooney and director Steven Soderbergh. All jittery cameras and quick cuts, the show glamorizes an unseemly and largely unseen side of our democracy. The lobbyists have a new motto: It's not sleazy. It's HBO.

For those without premium cable, the show's premise is that James Carville and Mary Matalin—playing the barely fictionalized, odd-couple version of “themselves” they've trotted out for years on *Meet the Press*—are launching a bipartisan lobbying firm. Their staff is made up of actors, but almost everyone else on the show is a real lobbyist, strategist, journalist or politician. *K Street* can't be aiming for mass appeal. If you don't know (lobbying firm) Akin Gump from Forrest Gump, it's hard to keep up.

The show's most surreal moment so far is a scene from the first episode in which Carville and his *Crossfire* pal Paul Begala prep Howard Dean for a debate. During a “fictional” strategy session, they warn Dean to expect questions about how a governor of a lily-white state like Vermont can appeal to the black electorate. Dean starts into his bit about being “the only candidate who talks about race to white audiences.” Carville interrupts with a quip: “Look, if the percentage of black folks in your state determined your position on civil rights, then Trent Lott would be Martin Luther King.” Dean took the line and used it during the real Democratic debate on October 9.

K Street reportedly works without a script, and the show is filmed and edited just days before it airs. The second episode included references to Wesley Clark's presidential bid and Hurricane Isabel before the power had come back on in Georgetown. The loose, slapdash style keeps things fresh. But Clooney and Soderbergh have barely chipped the surface of the real *K Street*.

It's not too late for the producers to explore some more intriguing—and true—storylines. Consider the tale of Majority Whip Roy Blunt—who just happens to be dating a Phillip Morris lobbyist—trying to sneak a Big Tobacco-friendly measure into the massive bill creating the Homeland Security Department. Or how about Rep. Michael Oxley (R-Ohio), who allegedly told the mutual



fund industry he'd call off the dogs if they replaced the president of their trade association with a Republican. Maybe a “fictional” investigation could generate some real public outrage.

Clooney surely couldn't dream up a better villain for *K Street* than Tom “The Hammer” Delay. Along with Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Penn.) and anti-tax maven Grover Norquist, the majority leader launched the “K Street Project,” a coordinated political effort to discourage business from even associating with Democrats. Every Tuesday, Santorum meets with a couple dozen top lobbyists and congressional staffers to discuss openings on K Street and whom the GOP would like to see get hired.

Norquist has compiled a master list of all the leading lobbyists, cataloging their political affiliations, experience and campaign contributions. He posted the dossier online (www.atr.org/kstreet), where legislators can take a look before deciding if a certain lobbyist or special interest “deserves” a meeting or consideration in drafting a piece of legislation. Perhaps if HBO parent company Time Warner dropped a few “D's” from the payroll, the *K Street* crew wouldn't have been barred from filming at the Capitol.

Delay got his wrist slapped by the House ethics committee a few years ago for pressuring the Electronics Industries Alliance to hire a Republican as its president. The EIA hired a Democrat anyway, but Delay made his point. With his reputation for vindictiveness—and his party's total control of Congress and the executive branch—Delay doesn't have to complain publicly about appointments anymore. This year Microsoft, Citigroup, Comcast, Shell Oil and Fluor all hired Republicans for their top lobbying positions. “Ninety percent of the new hires are going to Republicans,” Norquist recently told the *Christian Science Monitor*. “It should be 100 percent. It would be suicidal for them to go to a Democrat.”

In a must-read article in the July/August *Washington Monthly* (still available at www.washingtonmonthly.com), Nick Confessore compares the GOP effort to the old Democratic political machine, only the patronage jobs are on K Street instead of at City Hall. Here's how it works: The lobbyists raise money for candidates from their corporate clients, helping more Republi-

Before you know it, a president without an opponent is raising \$200 million for the primaries and the Clean Air Act has been gutted.

cans get elected. The Republican legislators in turn place their staffers—if not themselves—in plum lobbying jobs, where they devote a chunk of their new six- and seven-figure salaries to electing more Republicans. Before you know it, a president without an opponent is raising \$200 million for the primaries and the Clean Air Act has been gutted. Now that's a plot worthy of *The Sopranos*.

Of course, the producers of *K Street* can't count on lobbyists—even fictional ones—to expose how the system really works. What they need is a new character, a moderately good-looking, left-of-center scribe who thought *Solaris* didn't get a fair shake. All right, Mr. Soderbergh, I'm ready for my close-up. ■

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You can also register by calling toll free 866 666 1533. The National Conference on Media Reform is a project of Free Press, a national organization working to increase informed public participation in crucial media policy debates.

The Bushite Strategy...

By Salim Muwakkil

A September report by the U.S. Census Bureau revealed that more than 1.3 million additional Americans fell into poverty last year, and children accounted for almost one-half of that rise, with more than 600,000 added to the ranks of the poor.

What's more, poverty among children under age 5 increased by a full percentage point, from 18.8 percent in 2001 to 19.8 percent in 2002. Analysts expect an increase in that percentage, as well as an even bleaker picture for African Americans, when the Census Bureau releases more detailed data later this month.

This rise in poverty reflects the overall weakness in the economy and in the labor market, says Sharon Parrott of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a left-leaning think-tank. More distressingly, it comes at a time when the Bush administration continues to shred an already tattered social safety net.

The Department of Health and Human Services, for instance, recently announced the continued decline in funding of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which provides assistance to ease economic hardship and help parents find and keep jobs. Many of the families targeted by TANF are those with the young children who now are more likely to be living in poverty.

The connection between gaps in the safety net and increasing poverty is obvious, but by bankrupting the U.S. Treasury the Bush administration is rendering that link irrelevant. Were the stakes not so high it would be fascinating to sit back and watch just how far the Bush administration will go to achieve its right-wing agenda. Indeed, the administration, having squandered the national surplus, would have to add the government to the poverty rolls were it not for the forced beneficence of future generations.

With debt as far as the eye can see, some critics blame that calamity on the Bushites' incompetence. But the agenda of the right wing always has been to de-legitimize government as an agent of social welfare. If the right can't completely change the government's mind (those darn congressional liberals), the next best thing is to make it domestically impotent.

Then, even if the American people, deeply hypnotized by the drone of corporate media, were to suddenly awaken to this nightmarish reality, it likely would be too late to do anything. After all, we would have to deal with the facts on the ground.

Much like the Iraq invasion. We were neoconned into invading Iraq and now we have to stay the course or chaos will erupt. The facts on the ground demand we compound our mistake by making it over and over again.



1.3 million more American Almost half of t

This motif is reflected in other Bushite policies: the war on drugs and the war on terrorism.

The Bush administration's war on the poor is muted in the face of those other efforts, but it may turn out to be the most significant of all. The president's public demand for \$87 billion additional dollars to occupy and reconstruct Iraq has started the ball rolling in the opposite direction as Americans grow increasingly discontent.

With nearly every state facing fiscal difficulties, with unemployment insurance running out for jobless workers, with prescription drug prices hitting the roof, with anxieties about an overstretched military and under-funded veterans programs, the Bush administration's focus on Iraq is incongruent.

For even the densest among us, it's becoming clear that U.S. communities clamor in vain for federal assistance for education and infrastructure improvement as the Bushites cavalierly demand billions of our dollars to execute a poorly conceived military occupation.

"Under the way they're kind of **writing it right now** out of the Senate Finance Committee, some people could spend their entire five years—there's a **five-year work requirement**—on welfare **going to college**. Now, that's not my view of helping people become **independent**."

GEORGE W. BUSH, JULY 29, 2003

War on the Poor

By Jim Wallis

JOEFF DAVIS / JOEFF.COM

**fell into poverty last year.
em are children.**

The \$87 billion could make life a lot easier for many Americans were it allocated to domestic problems. For example, it is seven-times what the government intends to spend on Title I for low-income schools—after the administration cut more than \$6 billion from its No Child Left Behind bill. The Iraq request is more than the \$36 billion we spend on homeland security, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

This shift of resources to foreign adventures is no mistake. Just as the ideologues are seeking to cut government out of resource distribution domestically, they are desperately seeking to impose it internationally, a true Pax Americana.

The Bushite neocons realize there will be some protest against increasing poverty rates and growing wealth disparities. But with the media in the hands of corporations, these ideologues likely are gambling that social protest will be muted and ineffective. Progressive forces must mobilize to ensure they lose that bet. ■

I did a right-wing talk show not long ago on Fox News. Whenever you mention poverty in a venue like that, they scream that you're engaging in class warfare and promptly declare war on you.

I've decided that the right wing is correct on this: There is a class war, but they and their political allies are the ones who have declared it. As Episcopal Bishop John Chane said at a recent chapel service: "We've gone from a war on poverty to a war on the poor."

For those who care about poverty in America, the coming months are a critical time, a turning point similar to the New Deal of the '30s or the War on Poverty in the '60s. Now, as then, we can make a difference in the lives of millions of people. It is a time for people to speak and act on behalf of those still trapped in poverty.

Income Distribution

In its annual tax analysis for 2000, the IRS reported that the top 400 taxpayers—only 0.00014 percent of the population—now take in more than 1 percent of the total income of all taxpayers. Mean-time, their tax payments plummeted, mostly due to substantial reductions in capital gains tax rates. In 2000, the average annual income of the top 400 increased to \$174 million, while the average income for the bottom 90 percent was \$27,000. Even the *Wall Street Journal* calls it "so much money in so few hands ... a startling accumulation of wealth at the very top of the income pyramid." The "income gap," wrote the *Journal*, is becoming a "vast chasm."

The Bush Budget

A budget is a moral document. It clearly demonstrates the priorities of a family, an organization, a government. A budget shows what we most care about. President Bush sent his budget to Congress in February—a budget that he said reflected his most important priorities—so it is worth paying close attention to.

The president's budget of \$2.23 trillion proposed a record deficit of \$300 billion, speeded up billions of dollars of tax cuts that provide most of their benefits to the wealthiest Americans, called for huge increases for the Pentagon and slashed domestic spending—including core government programs that create affordable housing, curb juvenile delinquency, hire police officers, bring aid to rural schools, help make childcare available to low-income working mothers and guarantee children's health insurance. There are the Bush priorities.

The rest of the programs for mentoring and volunteering laid out in the president's State of the Union speech, while good, are relatively low-cost and ultimately more symbolic than substantial. Without the crucial funding for programs that directly and effectively reduce poverty, "compassionate conservatism" is now in grave danger of becoming compassionless conservatism.

Tax and Funding Cuts

It is now clear that the ongoing costs of the war with Iraq and the Bush administration's tax cuts for the wealthy are leading to a crisis for America's poorest children. Indeed, America's poor were the first casualties of this war, as U.S. domestic needs were literally pushed off the political agenda.

In April, Congress approved nearly \$80 billion requested by the administration as the first payment for the war with Iraq. Then they agreed to a budget resolution containing billions of dollars in new tax cuts and increased spending for the military, while resources for important domestic programs fell below the amount needed even to maintain current services in a deteriorating situation for the poor. In September, the president asked for speedy approval of an additional \$87 billion for military operations and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The consequences of these actions constitute a silent war, felt most severely in the poorest parts of the United States, where low-income families are desperately clutching onto the bottom rungs of the failing economy. Virtually every state in America is suffering terrible budget deficits. But there is no money in this budget for the states, which are confronting huge deficits and the prospect of draconian cuts in social services, mostly to the poor. In fact, the administration suggests that states could meet their budget challenges with the "flexibility" to cut programs like health insurance for the nation's poorest children. Consider some recent news stories telling of the administration's plans:

- Cuts in Medicaid benefits mean that millions of low-income Americans will see reductions in or will lose health insurance entirely.
- Vouchers that assist nearly 2 million families to pay rent will

be replaced by block grants run by the states, with no accountability for funding decisions.

- In the last two years, nearly half the states have cut child-care funding.

The truth is that hungry people will go without food stamps, poor children will go without health care, elderly will go without medicine, and school children will go without textbooks, so that the taxes of the wealthiest Americans can be further reduced.

Child Tax Credit

The exclusion of low-income working families from the child tax credit is becoming a parable, revealing a lesson about what happens to poor families and their children, again and again—they are simply left out.

Most of the country now knows that the \$350 billion tax cut passed this spring primarily benefited the wealthiest of Americans. Estimates are that each millionaire will receive \$93,000.

Yet 1 percent of the total tax cut—\$3.5 billion—could not be found for families who struggle mightily just to get by. As part of the legislation, the child tax credit for middle- and upper-income families was accelerated, and checks of \$400 were sent out. The Senate added an amendment to also accelerate the refundability of the child credit, so that working families who earn between \$10,500 and \$26,650 would benefit.

But at the last minute, in the House-Senate conference committee, that amendment was

dropped. Republicans said they wanted further reductions in capital-gains tax rates. When the deed was revealed and the storm broke, the Senate quickly fixed the omission in a way that costs the Treasury nothing. But the Republican leadership of the House, seemingly oblivious to the political damage feared by the White House, brazenly tacked the low-income family child tax credit onto another \$78 billion tax cut for wealthier families—in other words, using the restoration of the measure for poor families to increase tax cuts for the rich.

The issue deadlocked, and some Republicans have actually admitted that their tactic is an attempt to kill the child tax credit restoration altogether. As checks went in the mail for middle-class families, low-income working parents wonder why they got left out in the cold. Majority Leader Tom Delay's answer: "There are a lot of other things that are more important than this."

Welfare Reform

In 1996, after much contentious debate, Congress passed historic welfare reform legislation. Direct federal cash assistance to people in poverty was ended, consolidated into block grants to the states—known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF. The intention of the program was a change in paradigm from welfare to work.

Five years later the track record is mixed. Welfare rolls have been reduced by 50 percent, partly due to the new emphasis and



A father and child in Holyoke, Massachusetts

partly due to an economy that was—for most of that time—booming. The overall poverty rate and the child poverty rate both declined. Yet too many working people remain poor. Their jobs are mostly entry-level and minimum wage with few or no benefits. Many are only part time. Twelve million children are still in poverty.

The 1996 law also prohibited legal immigrants who entered the United States after 1996 from receiving public benefits. Some proposals in Congress would eliminate that ban and open eligibility to immigrants who have achieved legal status. The administration proposes restoring eligibility for food stamps only, keeping a ban on other forms of assistance.

What's the best way to build on the undeniable successes and make changes to improve the weaknesses of welfare reform? There are several key areas where we should focus our efforts.

First, and most important, must be a conceptual shift from ending welfare to ending poverty. We must change the political debate to measure our success by reducing the number of people in poverty, rather than just by reducing welfare rolls.

Then there is the basic question of funding. Some of the pending proposals, including the Bush administration's, maintain TANF funding at the same level it has been for the last five years—a total of \$16.5 billion per year—for the next five. But in real terms, flat funding is a cut. That \$16.5 billion won't buy now what it did in 1996, and certainly won't in 2007. This is no time to cut our concern, care and commitment to poor people and their children. Other proposals call for indexing the amount so that it increases by the rate of inflation. We have a clear moral message. A budget proposing billions a year in increases for the military and massive tax cuts for the wealthiest—while cutting funding for overcoming poverty—is unacceptable.

When debates are framed wrongly, they almost inevitably turn out badly. That happens all the time on Capitol Hill. In the welfare debate, focusing on simply reducing welfare rolls instead of reducing poverty is still the major problem. Most people involved in anti-poverty efforts would agree now that helping low-income people find "self-sufficiency" is far preferable to a system of endless subsidy.

But what are the best ways to support people in moving from subsidy to sustenance? And if work is the best way out of poverty (as most of us now agree), how do we make work really work in America? What do people need in support for childcare, in real education and training, in securing health care or affordable housing?

The TANF re-authorization debate could become a national discussion about how to overcome poverty in America. In fact, the debate doesn't make any sense apart from the goal of poverty reduction. Let's state our goal clearly and unanimously—welfare reform should be judged by how much we are actually reducing

poverty. Then let's have the most honest debate we've ever had about how to do that.

Reconstruction of Iraq

President Bush asked for \$87 billion more to pay for the American occupation and reconstruction of Iraq. New reports already reveal the comparative costs and sacrifices of this enormous expenditure: The entire proposed fiscal-year budget for the Department of Health and Human Services is \$66 billion; for the Department of Education, \$53 billion. The total amount for all 50 states to meet their projected budget shortfalls this year is \$78 billion.

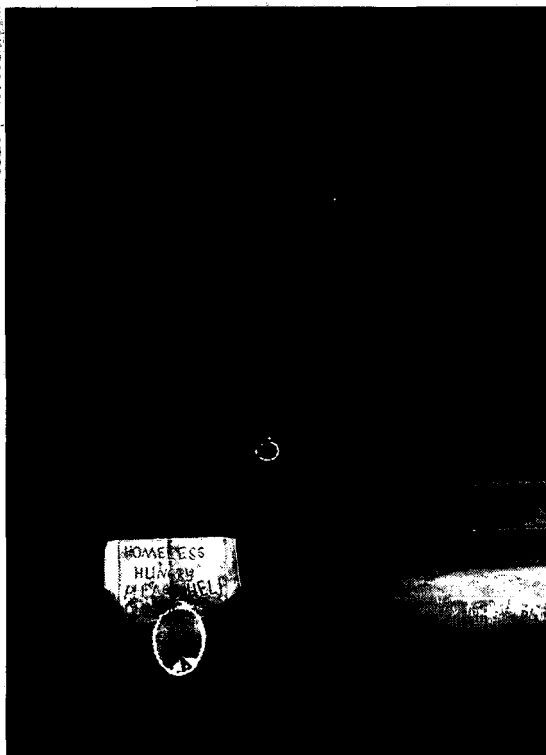
Clearly the sacrifices for the war in Iraq will be borne by those in most need who will bear the brunt of inevitable spending cuts to vital social programs, and by future generations who will ultimately pay for the beneficiaries of the Bush tax cuts and the recipients of the lucrative contracts for Iraqi reconstruction that are going to carefully selected American corporations. Those who will not sacrifice, in other words, are the wealthy and powerful allies of the Bush administration—and their core constituency. It is not hyperbole to say that those beneficiaries of wartime tax cuts and contract deals should now be called war profiteers.

So I propose two sacrifices the Bush administration should now make, if they expect the rest of the nation to share in the sacrifices of rebuilding Iraq. First, the White House should admit its miscalculations and policy failures. And those responsible for the failures should be the first to sacrifice. Therefore, the chief architects of the failed Iraqi policy—Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz—should both be asked to resign. These chief unilateralists have presided over the policy failures and, if a better direction of international cooperation is to be restored in Iraq, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz must step aside. Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.) already has called for their resignations.

Second, if the White House calls for sacrifice are to have any moral credibility, the administration's tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans must be immediately rescinded. Neither the poor, nor our children and their children, should be forced to pay for the war in Iraq, while those with the greatest ability to sacrifice are reaping a whirlwind of benefit.

Whether the resignations of Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz or the repeal of the tax cuts are politically likely at this moment (and they aren't) is not the point. There are fundamental issues of moral accountability here that go beyond political calculation. And those questions of accountability will be especially vital during an election year. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners, which previously published the stories from which this article was excerpted. For more go to www.soj.net.



Homeless in Chicago



School's Out

By Neil deMause

You'd think Maureen Lane would be happier than this. In April, after years of lobbying by her Welfare Rights Initiative and a coalition of advocates for the poor, the New York City Council passed Local Law 23, the Coalition for Access to Training and Education law. Seven years after President Clinton authorized strict limits on education for welfare recipients, the CATE law would at last allow city residents to enroll in college classes without jeopardizing their welfare benefits. The euphoria lasted all of one month.

On May 8, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg filed suit against the council, saying it was his prerogative to decide how to run the city's welfare programs, and no two-bit gang of elected officials was going to tell him how to do it. Two months later, Bloomberg's Human Resources Administration upped the ante, announcing that it would refuse to comply with the law, prompting a legal showdown that could drag on for years.

And now, as the latest wave of welfare legislation slogs through Congress, the entire CATE law could be wiped out by new federal requirements that would force cities and states to pull welfare recipients out of classes and find them jobs—any jobs, no matter if they'd be enough to pay the rent, let alone lift families out of poverty. So instead of spreading the word on the opportunities provided by Local Law 23, the CATE Coalition is back to lobbying local officials to do what they thought had been achieved back in April.

"In the City University of New York system alone, we've lost 23,000 students" to the changes in welfare law, Lane says. "That we even have to add one more family to that statistic this year, that's the shame of it."

As hopes for a more progressive, less punitive welfare reform have fallen away before the reality of a Republican-controlled Congress, education was thought to be the one possible exception. Unlike such wild-eyed schemes as guaranteed childcare or lifting the five-year time limit on benefits, education and training programs appeal even to many Republicans: Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) long has championed her state's Parents as Scholars program, which lets students count classroom time toward welfare's work requirements.

Certainly, there's plenty of evidence that education is by far the most effective and lasting route out of poverty. Studies have shown that a GED or high school diploma can boost earnings by more than 30 percent; with a vocational or bachelor's degree, income nearly doubles. Maine's Parents as Scholars program is a case in point: Its graduates' earnings jumped from \$7.50 to \$11.71 an hour after getting a college degree.

Traditionally, earning an education while receiving welfare was a common route out of poverty. All that changed in 1996, when the new Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program imposed a one-year cap on schooling, requiring at least 20 hours of work a week on top of coursework. Immediately, says Lane, enrollment of welfare recipients at CUNY plummeted.

"Students would say, 'I can't take this workfare assignment, it's right in the middle of my class schedule, and I'm about to graduate,'" she recalls. "You're told you're going to lose your food stamps and your Medicaid and everything else unless you forget school—the students left in droves."

For the architects of welfare reform, it wasn't a moment too soon. In an August 5 *Washington Post* op-ed, Heritage Foundation welfare guru Robert Rector and his colleague Brian Riedl blasted schooling as a waste of time: "Welfare recipients assigned to immediate work see their earnings increase more than twice as fast over the following five years as those first placed in education-based programs, according to calculations we made using data from the Manpower Demonstration Research Corp. If the goal of welfare reform is to raise earnings while reducing dependency, then quickly moving welfare recipients into real jobs is the answer. Prolonged classroom training tends to be the dead end."

Not so, says Mark Greenberg of the D.C.-based Center for Law and Social Policy. The study in question, he explains, found that narrow job-search programs fared slightly better at boosting short-term income than those stressing adult basic education—but never studied the effects of GED or vocational training, let alone a college degree.

"It makes sense that if somebody is at a 5th-grade reading level and can get to a 6th- or 7th-grade reading level, it doesn't much affect employment prospects," Greenberg says. In fact, the pro-

New Welfare Rules Could Put Education Out of Reach

gram most effective at increasing earnings was a Portland, Oregon, program that included both job-search and vocational training. (The MDRC study also found that none of the programs significantly boosted total income. Participants' paychecks were neatly matched by loss of food stamps and welfare benefits, leaving them just as poor as when they started.)

For welfare activists and recipients themselves, the value of education is self-evident.

"I was going to school for my GED, and I was only allowed to go two days a week," says Nichole Thomas, a mother of two who recently joined Families United for Racial and Economic Equality, one of the groups in New York's CATE Coalition. "Welfare is supposed to be a stepping stone to help you get on your feet. If they make you drop out of college, how are you going to get on your feet? We would rather have a job. But if you're going to end up working at McDonald's, it's not enough."

Theresa Bill, then a women's studies lecturer at the University of Hawaii, says that when the new work rules came down, "people were leaving school in droves. Talking to students about their classroom performance, it was clear that with their work hours they just didn't have time to do their homework."

To stem the tide of dropouts, the university teamed with the state department of human services to create Bridge to Hope, which allows students receiving welfare to count class time toward their work requirements, and provides part-time campus jobs to cover the rest. It's been a popular program, with the 150 students it serves annually and with state legislators.

If trying to get an education while on welfare is a mess now, it could be thrown into complete disarray when Congress finally passes legislation reauthorizing TANF, which could happen anytime in the next few months.

While welfare terminology gets more arcane with each new "reform," two of the key battlegrounds in the current reauthorization debate are over *work hours* and *participation rate*. Under existing law, recipients must work (or participate in "work activities") 30 hours a week, although some states have passed even stiffer standards. House Republicans, following the lead of the Bush administration, have called for a 40-hour-a-week workload, with a minimum of 24 hours in "core activities" precluding training or

community service—a schedule that would effectively block single moms from taking classes without risking their benefits.

The participation rate is a more esoteric figure, indicating the minimum number of welfare recipients who must meet program rules for a state to continue receiving federal funds. Under the 1996 law, the rate stands at 50 percent—but "caseload reduction credits" for cutting the rolls have given some states effective participation rates as low as zero. (Only five states, according to the Department of Health and Human Services, have half their caseloads officially participating in TANF.)

"Under current law, a state is always free to let somebody participate in postsecondary education, but if it's for more than 12 months, it can't count toward the participation rate," Greenberg says. "Once you've got a high participation rate, you really have to structure your program around what does or doesn't count."

Both the House and Senate bills would raise this bar to 70 percent, with much less wiggle room than under the old law: The House would credit only caseload reduction since 2001, while the Senate bill would provide a limited "employment credit" for moving people off welfare into jobs. For states that have been using the old law's leeway to ease restrictions on education—23 states, according to CLASP, currently allow more access to education than is permitted under TANF—such a jump in the rate would be a catastrophe. (New York's CATE law, in fact, would likely be nullified entirely, as it requires the state to exceed the minimum participation rate by at least 10 percent—an easy target now, but nearly impossible under a strict 70 percent rate.)

Taken together, the increased work hours and tightened participation rates are expected to hit states with billions of dollars in new program costs, at a time when state governments swimming in red ink are already looking to slash benefits. It's a scenario that could severely blunt the impact of Sen. Snowe's Parents as Scholars amendment—attached to the Senate bill, but not the House—which would let states allow college classes to count toward work hours. Even if the Snowe amendment survives, there's the danger that cash-strapped states will simply decline to implement a program that would force them to keep paying benefits to students until they get a degree.

"With the unemployment rate what it is, there is no way to put everybody to work, so the states are going to have to create massive workfare programs," says Berkeley education activist Diana Spatz, noting that the California legislative analyst's office estimated \$2.9 billion in new costs if the House bill passes. "I don't know how our state's going to be able to manage."

Until the Congressional debates are settled, Spatz and other activists can only continue their local efforts, hoping that they aren't obliterated by the latest dictates from Capitol Hill. For New York's CATE Coalition, it means everything from staging meetings with local education officials, to ambushing city welfare chief Verna Eggleston—who downplayed her single-mother's reliance on welfare for nearly two decades—outside her office to demand a meeting on the still-dormant Local Law 23.

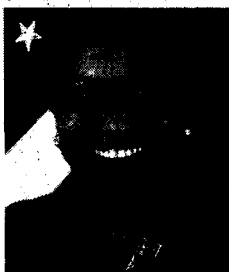
Nichole Thomas, one of those who confronted Eggleston, says there's no excuse for the current stalemate: "If there are people out there who don't mind working, that's fine. But there're a lot of us who do need a diploma. You got yours. Why can't we get it?" ■

The Candidates on the Poor

By Neil DeMause

One thing about the 10 Democratic presidential challengers: They don't put their feet in their mouths quite like the incumbent. Unfortunately, that's about all you can say when it comes to poverty. All slammed the House Republicans for excising the poor from their child tax credit bill last spring and most would raise the minimum wage (to, well, something more than it is now). But for the bulk of the Democratic field, the poor are somewhere between an afterthought and a cudgel with which to bash Bush.

It's probably to be expected this early in the campaign, says Deborah Weinstein of the Coalition on Human Needs, and maybe even accepted. "If the word 'poverty' makes people feel 'that's someone else's problem,' then I don't find fault with that," she says, noting that such policies as jobs programs and expanded access to education would cut across all income sectors. "Having said that, I think some more alarm bells need to be sounded about the failure of programs that are supposed to protect families from poverty."



CAROL MOSELEY BRAUN Braun talks a good game but is woefully thin on specifics: "This is a great country, and all we have to do is tap the resources we have to make certain that no American is left behind, that every community has good jobs in it, that people have hope that they can contribute to the whole community to the maximum extent of their ability, whether they're black, white, Hispanic, male or female." She called the 1996 welfare reform a "Pontius Pilate approach," that is "washing our hands of responsibility for poor children." She backs single-payer health care.

WESLEY CLARK Like much about the four-star general, little is known about his thoughts on poverty. Don't look to his threadbare campaign statements for clarification. Here's the general on the Bush tax cuts, for example: "When you have more money, you have room for the luxuries and one of the luxuries and one of the privileges we enjoy is living in this great country. So I think that the tax cuts were unfair."



HOWARD DEAN The Vermont governor's credentials as poverty-fighter rest almost entirely on his plan to expand the Children's Health Insurance Program—effectively creating a federal expanded Medicaid program to benefit the near-poor—covering everyone at or below 185 percent of the poverty level and all children and young adults at or below 300 percent of poverty. On other matters, there's less evidence of a crusader for the poor: Dean's Vermont was an early pioneer of welfare, and the governor has bragged of being one of the "pioneers of welfare reform," which he thinks "has been an incredibly positive force." Like most Democrats (and many Republicans), he opposes the 40-hour work week requirement and lack of childcare funding in Bush's welfare bill, but that's been the extent of his criticism.



JOHN EDWARDS Like his campaign, Edwards' poverty proposals are a mishmash of down-home rhetoric ("Every time I go to vote in the Senate, I get a picture of the people who worked in the mill with my dad."), inspired policy ideas (a \$2,500 family leave credit that would do wonders for parents of newborns), and nuttiness (he's called for cutting the federal work force by 10 percent, which would not do wonders for the dismal job market). He's been stumping hard for his College for Everyone plan, which provides one year free tuition at state and community colleges for those who work 10 hours a week. It's unclear whether students who already work that much to make ends meet while attending school would get the tuition waiver, or what would happen after that first year.





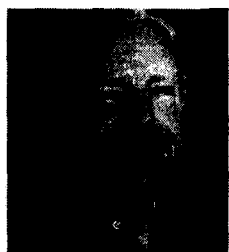
DICK GEPHARDT His campaign's pet projects include persuading the World Trade Organization to institute an "international minimum wage" (to raise working conditions both overseas and at home) and establishing a tax credit to encourage employers to cover medical benefits for employees. He was among the 101 U.S. Representatives to vote against the 1996 welfare reform bill.

BOB GRAHAM Like many Democrats, he appears to be positioning himself as the candidate of the not-quite-as-rich-as-Republicans, with promises of "policies that benefit middle-class families, not just the wealthy few." As a senator, he voted for the welfare reform bill in 1996 (as well as its more onerous 1995 predecessor that President Clinton vetoed). He's not the most astute of the candidates on poverty issues: When asked at a Children's Defense Fund forum about the child tax credit, he seemed to misunderstand the question and lashed out at the Bush administration for maintaining too high a payroll tax.



JOHN KERRY The senator from Massachusetts has pitched his economic platform squarely down the middle of the road, declaring himself "for a tax cut for the middle class" who "are getting pummeled everywhere they turn." (He also said he wouldn't repeal the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy and said Dean committed an "extraordinary gaffe" when he called for it.) Other positions are similarly centrist to the point of meaninglessness: Kerry says he wants a "comprehensive plan to make four years of college affordable for all" but voted for the 1996 welfare reform bill that limited recipients to one year of education. In 1995, Kerry led Democratic support in the Senate for welfare reform, introducing a "personal responsibility contract" for recipients and opposing benefits for legal immigrants. "We will have to watch closely from the beginning to guarantee that no one falls through the cracks," he said at the time—his primary effort in this regard has been co-sponsoring an amendment (thus far unsuccessful) to add \$2.25 billion a year in childcare funds to the welfare reauthorization bill.

DENNIS KUCINICH The man who declared "poverty's a weapon of mass destruction" is the only candidate to address the problems of welfare reform in his campaign statements. (He takes note of plunging college enrollment among welfare recipients, for example.) Like many congressional Democrats, he has called for expanded education and training opportunities for people receiving welfare, saying "education is the only solution proven to reduce poverty levels." Unlike most of his Democratic colleagues, he believes home childcare should count as an allowable work activity. He supports single-payer health care.



JOSEPH LIEBERMAN Here's another candidate who uses the poor mostly as a rhetorical device: He slams President Bush for overseeing "Poverty-gate" but proposes few policy initiatives of his own. (Unless "restart[ing] our economic engine" can be considered a policy.) His record on the poor is heavy on dispensing moral judgment—including a welfare amendment granting states bonuses for reducing teen pregnancy and co-sponsoring faith-based charity programs with arch-nutcase Rick Santorum (R-Penn.). Like Kerry, he voted for the 1996 welfare bill, saying if problems arose "we will all have to be honest enough to come back and fix this." In June he declared: "In the coming weeks, I will be releasing a detailed plan outlining the specific programs and policies" to fight poverty. We're still waiting.



AL SHARPTON Beyond his street cred as son of a welfare mom, Sharpton's record on issues affecting the poor is skimpy. Aside from calling for a renewed federal jobs program, the Reverend endorses a series of Constitutional "amendments" sponsored by Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-III.): the Right to Education Amendment, the Right to Quality Health Care Amendment and so on. Sharpton was asked by the *Village Voice* in February his views on changes to welfare that would require women to work 20 hours more with no additional funds for childcare: "First of all, it is more of the criminalizing the poor for being poor." But he got no more specific than to suggest "there must be allowances for single parents in terms of childcare." He supports single-payer health care. ■



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JOSEPH LIEBERMAN www.joe2004.com
AL SHARPTON www.al2004.org



LUIS DAVILLA

Bush Meat

By G. Pascal Zachary
ACCRA, GHANA

Human interference has long threatened wildlife throughout the world, including dietary habits imperiling endangered species in West Africa. But an emerging Afro-environmentalism in Ghana is now raising hopes that animal protection there at least will improve.

Many people who live in a broad belt of West Africa, stretching from Senegal to the Congo, regularly eat forest animals, including a rodent popularly known as grasscutter, monkeys, and such great apes as chimpanzees and gorillas.

The practice of hunting so-called bush meat is centuries-old in sub-Saharan Africa, but rising populations, more lethal weapons and intensified logging have increased pressure on animal populations—bringing many species to the verge of extinction.

Environmentalists from Europe and North America seek to ban the harvest and sale of bush meat. But African environmentalists resist such efforts, saying bans are impossible to enforce and disregard tradition. Eating bush meat, they say, is a cherished part of West African life—and an important source of protein for forest-dwellers and other rural people. Afro-environmentalism seeks to combine

Western concerns over biodiversity with African cultural traditions—strategies such as those working to protect threatened animals in Ghana are the result.

“For hundreds of years, we Africans achieved a balance between man and animal,” says Okyeame Ampadu-Agyei, director of Conservation International in Ghana. “There was a logic to these relations that was upset by the conquest of West Africa by Europe and then the embrace of Western values in the post-independence period. But have no doubt: No conservation movement will ever achieve deep roots in Africa without reestablishing the logic of African traditions.”

Ampadu-Agyei, a native of Ghana who lives in the capital city of Accra, has assembled a collection of folklore about the connection between traditional life and local animals. In a study last year, he documented the extent to which Ghana’s

dominant ethnic group, the Akan, and its many subgroups known as clans, associate their well-being with animals. Clan art, widespread at the village level, often represents these animals as the source of spiritual inspiration.

“The totem system protected the totem species ... [and] thus was an early and very effective form of conservation,” Ampadu-Agyei says. He argues that a revival of totemism could turn the Akan into “a formidable force for conservation.”

The cultural approach to conservation is crucial, he says, because too many Africans view environmentalism as a Western affront: understandable for wealthy societies but inappropriate for poor countries where many people still compete with animals for survival. By associating animal preservation with ethnicity, conservation becomes Africanized, he says, and people realize that their survival cannot come at the expense of wildlife.

Using this approach, Afro-environmentalism is gaining momentum in Ghana. Ampadu-Agyei travels the width and length of the country, roughly the size of Oregon, with the message that destruction of animals threatens the collective identity of Africans. He gives seminars to traditional chiefs, who still retain great authority in rural Ghana, and to hunters. Consciousness-raising among hunters is especially important because the same skills required to kill wild animals often are used in their defense.

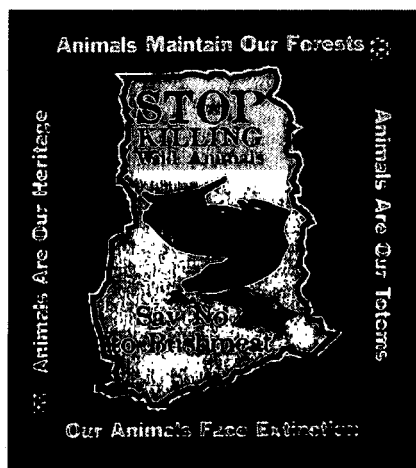
"Hunters are thus important allies," he says. "If they can be taught to respect certain rules of engagement, wildlife gets all sorts of benefits."

To be sure, conservation requires more than a shift in attitudes. Ampadu-Agyei, whose work is chiefly funded by non-African donors, is trying to undercut demand for bush meat by documenting possible adverse health effects of eating it. At a conference last year in Accra, a chemistry professor from the University of Ghana estimated that 30 percent of bush meat was killed by chemical poisoning. The chemist, Phillip Yeboah, concluded, "Every bush meat consumer is at risk."

Conservationists also seek to domesticate animals, or at least the most popular of those eaten, the grasscutter, considered a delicacy and popular in stews. A single animal can sell for \$9, or about three times the price of a chicken. And to limit damage done from hunting, private and public efforts are attempting to create grasscutter farms. The idea has been around for years. As yet there is no foolproof method of breeding grasscutter in captivity, so yields are low while costs remain high.

West Africans eat a variety of wild game. A 1998 study by the government of Ghana found that hunters killed 23 animal species in 15 areas. About a quarter of that total consisted of grasscutter, but antelope, deer, monkey and giant rat also were hunted.

With so large a hunger for bush meat, West Africans are not easily persuaded that animal protection is in their best interest—giving rise to the need for enforcement of hunting bans. But the work is dangerous. It is difficult to see in the dense forest, and poachers often fight back. A few months ago, Lobito, a 29-year-old wildlife police officer, was injured by a machete while apprehending a poacher in Ankasa, a protected forest inhabited by rare primates near Ghana's border with the Ivory Coast.



West Africans have begun associating animal protection with ethnicity.

Enforcement has limitations even when police and park rangers are vigilant. Lobito earns less than \$50 a month and receives the same pay whether he catches poachers. Lobito complains that local courts often quickly release poachers after arrest, and the fine for killing a Mona

monkey is about 50 cents, yet each fetches about \$60 in Accra—and 10 times that amount in London, home to an estimated 1 million West Africans.

The relative prosperity of West Africans living in Europe has added a new dimension to the conservation problem. In response, European countries have sought to break the bush meat trade by installing customs officials trained in finding stashes of fresh kills. The European Union also launched a public-awareness campaign in 2002 against the trade. In addition to winning support of dozens of public-interest groups, more than 80 members of the British parliament came out in support of tighter regulations on the importation of wild game.

Despite these conservation and regulatory efforts, animal populations continue to decline—and the political economy of the wildlife remains on an unsustainable course. ■

G. Pascal Zachary is international director of Journalists for Human Rights and is based in Accra.

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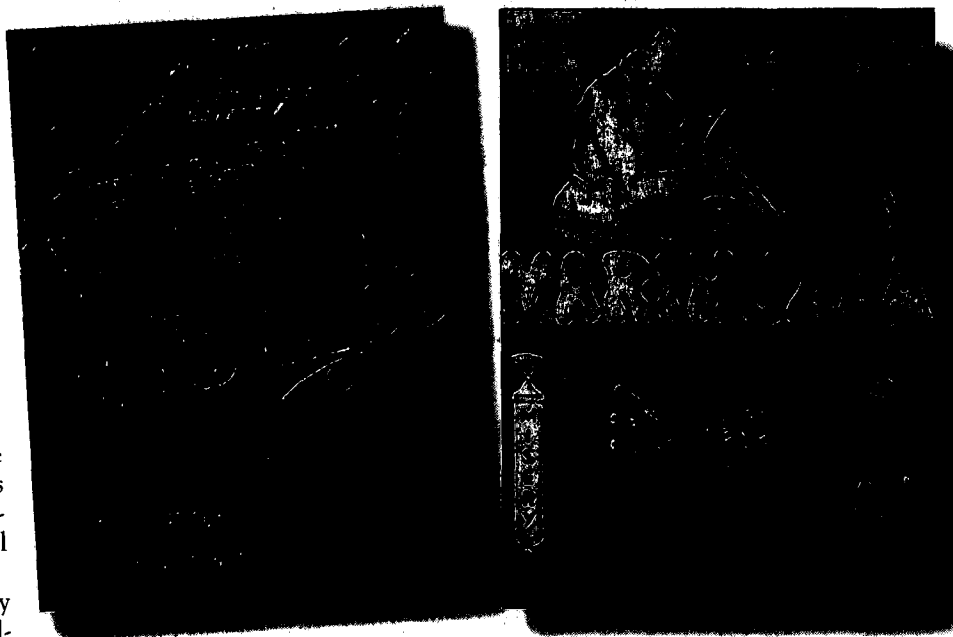
Using Your Brain on Drugs

By Mike Newirth

Numerous tightly rolled cannabis cigarettes were in evidence at a June 12 luncheon at the Heartland Institute, a libertarian policy think-tank in the Chicago Loop. These doobies were emblazoned on the cover of the provocative, plainspoken book, *Saying Yes: In Defense of Drug Use* by Jacob Sullum, a senior editor at *Reason* ("Free Minds and Free Markets") magazine.

Yet the capacity crowd of 36 hardly appeared ready to kick back and smoke up: Mainly white men over 50 and conservatively dressed, they appeared more likely to break a bong over a slacker's head than to consider Sullum's argument against prohibitionism's moral fearfulness and shoddy science.

Sullum's thesis is that drug war policy has been ruled by "voodoo pharmacology," the notion that certain chemicals can compel immoral behavior. Anti-drug



Despite being fully discredited, the rhetoric of '30s anti-drug propaganda is still with us.

Saying Yes: In Defense of Drug Use

By Jacob Sullum
Tarcher/Putnam
352 pages, \$25.95

messages depend upon the idea that illicit substances usurp users' judgment and free will, and that any usage equals abuse. Punitive standards of interdiction and punishment compound the message that such substances inspire immoral behavior.

Sullum subjects this invocation of automatic turpitude to a withering critique. By examining the mythologized links between sloth, lust, madness, gluttony, and wrath and their purported chemical precursors (historically including tobacco and alcohol), he reveals the intellectual poverty of the right's central conceit and retrieves the moral high ground ceded by uneasy legalization proponents.

By discussing illicit substances in terms reserved for socially valued drugs (notably alcohol) Sullum is able to examine what psychiatrist Norman Zinberg termed "set and setting"—the combination of environment and expectations

that determines the qualities of a drug experience. When alcohol prohibition's failure discredited the "demon rum" fervor of its proponents, our extensive cultural experience with drinking allowed us to encourage "controlled use," Sullum says.

The demonization of illicit drugs has resulted in a cultural naiveté that promotes irresponsible use and the black market. In Sullum's terms, voodoo pharmacology recasts illicit substances (and their users) as the dreadful "other," by averring that alcohol and drugs are fundamentally different, one controllable and humane, the other corrupting and devilish. This intellectual dishonesty, spoon-fed to children, contributes to rampant social misuse of alcohol and other substances, as anyone familiar with drug use among adolescents knows.

Moderate, responsible drug use is the elephant in the room of anti-drug zealotry. Thus, even a politician like former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson, who supported consideration of decriminalization, was unable to deviate from the Clinton administration's script that drug use is always bad. While then-U.S. Sen. John Ashcroft (R-Mo.) saw no contradiction in his support of a major donor, St. Louis-based Anheuser-

Busch, that sought to kill legislation limiting beer ads on television, calling alcohol "a product that's in demand." (Sullum finds Ashcroft's self-justification "notably lacking in moral reflection.")

If, as Sullum suggests, the fearsome otherness of illicit drugs is artificial and sags under analysis, then what allows the drug warriors to get away with such a transparent syllogism? At the Heartland Institute luncheon, Sullum dismantled the melodramatic, exaggerated morality that props up our denial of temperance's possibilities.

Sullum detects this in the equating of "sloth" with substance use, which was key to pre-Prohibition anti-alcohol propaganda and now is used to demonize cannabis as an aspiration killer suited to losers. Sullum examines "amotivational syndrome," the concept that marijuana use creates "dropouts" disinterested in achievement, which provided the psychiatric underpinning for cannabis prohibition once the '30s-era "reefer madness" typography of violence had been derided. Discredited by the '90s, yet still key to anti-cannabis sentiment, amotivational syndrome seems inconsistent with the

strange case of Progressive Insurance's Peter Lewis, innovative businessman, billionaire and "functioning pothead." While Lewis may be an extreme example, Sullum contends that rather than candidates for *That 70s Show* couch, average cannabis smokers are employed adults with family and community ties—and therefore have reason to conceal their preferred intoxicant.

Drugs-linked with artificially induced violence—cocaine, crack and methamphetamine—initially seem a harder sell. Sullum argues that alcohol is the drug most associated with mayhem, but societies have long accepted the thesis of psychologist Craig McAndrew and anthropologist Robert Edgerton's classic study *Drunken Comportment*: The variety of learned individual and cultural responses to alcohol confirms that "drinking does not necessarily beget violence." Even the striking statistic that "about a third of convicted criminals are thought to have been drinking at the time of their offense," fails to isolate the drinking activity from "personal and environmental factors that make both drinking and crime more likely." Indeed, violent repeat offenders often cite their drinking or stimulant use as part of a "diminished capacity" defense (a ploy Sullum despises). The anti-cannabis fervor of the '30s, Sullum notes, developed around lurid, racially oriented rumors regarding the killer weed's propensity to inspire violence and fortify offenders with "Dutch courage."

Sullum's notion of voodoo pharmacology is founded on the historic attempt to lock in a causality that doesn't exist. Such causality is a primary rationale for punishment. As noted gamesman William Bennett claims, "a non-addict's drug use ... is highly contagious."

As befits a writer entering this hall of mirrors, Sullum is a bit of a contradiction: He has impeccable credentials as a libertarian journalist yet notes that his own "modest but instructive" use of illicit intoxicants formed the "seed of my conviction that it's reasonable to expect drug users to exercise self-control." Thus, his observations on the Silent Majority of responsible users have an authority the anti-drug lobbies lack: "Prohibition renders [such users] invisible, because they fear the legal, social and economic consequences of speaking up." His book gains

dramatic texture and validity via interviews with such users, including MBAs, software engineers, publicists, journalists, academics, a truck driver, and a social worker—all of whom understandably requested anonymity.

He implies that these users represent the "average" consumer of illicit substances, whose drug use is unremarkable when incorporated into mainstream lives. Given that most politicians' survival depends on maintaining the fiction that, as Sullum puts it, "drug users are different from you and me," this silent drug-using majority ironically perpetuates the careers of those who promote the drug war. Meanwhile, the visible minority of troubled users become archetypes in the cultural landscape, enforcing

Sullum's thesis is that drug war policy has been ruled by 'voodoo pharmacology,' the notion that certain chemicals can compel immoral behavior.



the "lazy pothead" (or the acid casualty or the enraged cokehead) stereotype.

Sullum's audience at the Heartland Society was receptive to his argument that most individuals have ample incentive (health, employment, community standing) to keep their drug use in check. With regard to counterarguments that decriminalization would result in numerous irresponsible new users, Sullum references this hidden population of socially functional drug users to call for dispassionate evaluations of prohibition's costs and benefits. In the meantime, policy-makers' continued insistence that dangerous excess (rather than responsible use) establishes the norm results in a morally and intellectually stunted debate.

The libertarian perspective provides a valuable intellectual counterpoint to the drug-war mythology but maintains a colder distance from adverse outcomes. For instance, Sullum argues that decrimi-

nalization of even stimulants like cocaine or opiates like heroin would not result in graver social conditions than the already dysfunctional landscape of the drug war (black-market violence, theft compelled by artificial "street prices," and so forth).

Yet what of the inevitable spike of addictive personalities who lose control? Presumably, from a libertarian perspective, they would need to fend for themselves, an idea confirmed by Sullum, who noted in e-mail correspondence that he would not support diverting additional funds to beef-up clinical rehabilitation: "In practical terms, this kind of subsidy tends to undermine self-control." Such a laissez-faire approach to dismantling drug prohibition could create new pockets of social pathology, undermining any decriminalization efforts in their infancy.

Sullum also declines to support a "sin tax" on decriminalized drug products, a frequent plank of left-leaning cannabis advocates. Yet any conceptualization of a post-drug war America must take into account the damage wrought on many communities by the war, as well as the need for a substantial addiction therapy regimen. Some kind of taxable "war chest" seems crucial to envisioning such a project.

Sullum avoids these thorny ambiguities of decriminalization for the simplicity of his ideas in *Saying Yes*. Indeed, this book's sheer prescience makes any objection seem churlish. And in some microscopic way, the Heartland luncheon was like a hazy glimpse of the future, representing stirrings of consensus regarding how the drug war will end, even if it seems unimaginable for years to come.

With regard to the segregated personal destruction and diversion of law-enforcement resources that the drug war has produced, Heartland-style libertarians and ACLU-style civil libertarians are on the same side, even if arriving via different journeys. At a time when most "writing on drugs" consists of youthful preening memoirs, the coolheaded Sullum has produced a genuinely dangerous book—a white paper from that distant unimaginable future. ■

Mike Newirth is fiction editor of *Bridge* magazine and a contributor to *The Baffler*, the *Chicago Reader* and the anthology *Boob Jubilee: The Cultural Politics of the New Economy*.

Son of a ...

By Kelly Kleiman

It sounds like something from the pages of *The Onion*: "Son of Prominent Father Recommends Family Favoritism." Unfortunately, Adam Bellow's book *In Praise of Nepotism* isn't nearly so amusing. Instead, the son of

In Praise of Nepotism

By Adam Bellow
Doubleday Publishing
576 pages, \$30

Nobel Prize-winning novelist Saul Bellow has taken a modestly interesting idea—that the persistence of nepotism suggests it has some enduring value—and turned it into dogma: Nepotism is the single most significant characteristic of social organization, and a good thing, too.

From pre-human history (the appearance of family protection systems in the animal kingdom) through the Greeks, the Rothschilds and the Bushes, Bellow marches us through circumstances in which the sons of successful men had opportunities given them for that reason.

When the sons (or other male heirs—the word "nepotism," he notes, actually describes preferences granted nephews) succeed, the author credits the inherent value of relying on people who grew up in the business. When they fail, he blames not the practice but its poor execution. Success is the rule and failure the exception, he says, explaining that more families who became notable have succeeded than failed.

When men appear to make it on their own, Bellow shows they had fathers. If those fathers couldn't help them, he recounts the help they received from other older powerful men. He describes this as "building an artificial clan"—at which point the concept of nepotism is so baggy as to lose all meaning.

It is of course literally true that there's no such thing as a self-made man. (All were of woman born, for one thing, though the absence of women from the narrative might allow readers to forget that.) But that's not a basis for arguing there's no difference between people who have family-provided opportunities and those who don't. Impressing your father or uncle is easier than impressing a stranger, which is the source of what Bellow derides as the "hypocritical distinction between nepotism and other kinds of favoritism." Failing to answer the objections of people who understand nepotism as "opportunities given to people based on their parent-

age rather than their merits," he simply redefines the practice as "opportunities given to people, most of whom, really, you know, probably are as good at it as anyone else would be, and if they're not they'll get fired, and anyway it's natural for a father to love his son."

From its sociobiological beginning through its neocon policy end, *In Praise of Nepotism* reinterprets the history of the world to show that preference for family is "hard-wired," a neologism often favored by those who profit from existing arrangements.

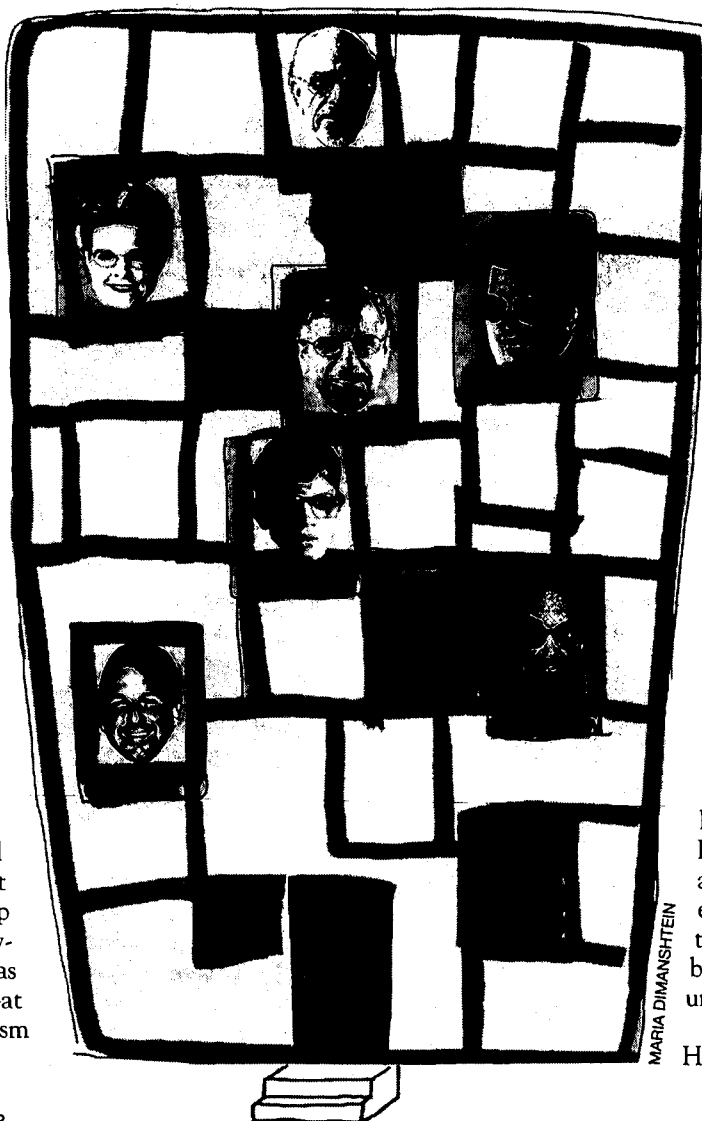
Bellow tries to cleanse the practice of its reputational stain by prescribing rules for "the new nepotism" (same as the old nepotism): Don't embarrass me, don't embarrass yourself, pass it on. While he's at it, he blithely acknowledges that beneficiaries of nepotism "may get initial opportunities that others don't,"

but claims this is harmless: "Other people must prove their merit before the fact, but nepotees must prove it after." Well, no: Everybody has to prove himself after being given an opportunity—that's why it's called an opportunity and not an outcome.

Disarmingly, or so he hopes, Bellow concedes, "I did enjoy advantages unavailable to others at the entry level. ... Doors were sometimes opened." What he won't admit is that those initial opportunities are the point, which is why the body charged with assuring fair treatment in the employment market is called the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Nowhere does Bellow answer the central objection to nepotism—that it gives unearned advantage to those who already have unearned advantage. Instead, he frames the practice as a "valuable corrective to the excesses of meritocracy," a system whose recent ascent he blames on the striving and unheroic middle class.

The book's subtitle, "A Natural History," also is telling. Although



he purports to disdain the fallacy that what is natural is right, Bellow devotes 500-plus pages to advancing just that argument. Things would have been different, he tells us, and worse, if Americans had discriminated against the great John Quincy Adams just because he was John Adams' son. As to the legions of undeserving heirs—those who take what their fathers created and throw it away or prove unequal to it—Bellow faults not the debilitating effect of unearned privilege but insufficient nepotism. He speculates, "Perhaps if [FDR] had been more involved with his sons, a bit more nepotistic . . . they might have turned out better."

This is symptomatic of the book's larger problem, which is to define nepotism to mean "love of family," as though anyone who criticizes the advancement of one person over another based on his family name is someone who hates families. This familiar neocon tactic recalls various "family values" arguments. To demonstrate his point, Bellow takes some breathtaking leaps of logic: "Adams's humanizing nepotism is his saving grace," he writes, "for there is finally nothing more inhuman—even monstrous—than a public man who has extinguished all family feeling."

Conflation of nepotism (the distribution of goodies based on a closed private system) and family feeling (the system) almost succeeds in obscuring the central fact that nepotism is privilege reproducing itself.

Bellow's book is an example of the "greed is good" school of politics, that plumes itself on its courage in asserting something that's merely a vulgar claim of privilege, and tries to defeat any expression of qualms by saying, "Oh, don't be so politically correct!" All too often, writers who brave political correctness to offer a trenchant point of view are merely arguing nakedly for the inexcusable. That's the case here: there's nothing particularly courageous about being unable to distinguish a commonplace vice from a virtue.

There are a few interesting ideas hidden in Bellow's mind-numbing recitation of whose son fought at Thermopylae or went up San Juan Hill. Bellow notes that feminism has spurred a decline in the use of anti-nepotism rules in the professions and the academy, where frank "partner prefer-

ences" serve as bait to attract desirable married scholars.

Meanwhile, anti-nepotism clauses in the Civil Rights Act continue to be enforced on the factory floor and in the

Nowhere does Bellow answer the central objection to nepotism—that it gives unearned advantage. Instead, he frames the practice as a 'valuable corrective to the excesses of meritocracy,' a system whose recent ascent he blames on the striving and unheroic middle class.

union hall. As a result, the rich can begin power-couple dynasties, while working-class families struggle one individual at a time. "Institutionalized nepotism represents in many cases the workingman's only chance to do for his son what the rich man does for his as a matter of course." Thus, the current system is actually a smoke screen for class warfare, Bellow argues. A fascinating idea, but one that Bellow is content to merely mention in passing.

The logic of the book also suggests that those outraged over the "unfair opportunities" provided by affirmative action can be ignored, because unfair opportunities are the American way. Bellow tiptoes perilously near support for affirmative action when he recommends defeating nepotism's baleful consequences to minority opportunity by beginning "to see blacks as members of the family." But he saves himself by failing to propose any means to foster or enforce such an expansion. That may be because government—many of whose powers he advocates transferring to the family—is the only such means.

Bellow's most intriguing, and most troubling, idea is that "the real constituents of human society are not individuals but families." Americans made quite the opposite decision at the nation's founding: The Bill of Rights applies to its "constituent" individuals, not their families. If we believed in family rights, married women wouldn't be able to vote if their husbands did. While acknowledging that "the deep-dyed American prejudice against nepotism obviously has its roots in the republican idealism of the founders," the author dismisses those ideals as "impractical."

There are, of course, socio-political systems of which the family is the essential constituent: We call them "aristocracies," which acknowledge family rights by seating family representatives in bodies designed to make decisions for others. It's true, as Bellow asserts, that respect for individual rights is the exception rather than the rule of human history, but it's still surprising to encounter such casual disdain for the American experiment. By the time he finally acknowledges that nepotism may "offend against our democratic values," it almost seems that undermining democracy is his goal, rather than an incidental drawback.

Bellow's desire for the family to supplant the individual would be merely comic in another time and place: he's unlikely to have examined carefully its true implications for our political system. But while individual rights are under assault by an administration committed to fostering the preservation of inherited fortunes, a book in praise of hereditary privilege is less funny than frightening. And when Bellow trumpets family succession in business as an example of New Nepotistic accomplishment, the entire book begins to seem like an elaborate brief for the repeal of the estate tax.

Some sons certainly do well, as Bellow argues: even certain daughters have done so. But the very idea that we should organize our society around the happenstance of family connection is—to borrow another buzz-word from the neocons—un-American. ■

Kelly Kleiman's reportage and criticism appear regularly in The Chicago Reader, the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Magazine and the Wall Street Journal.

Undiscovered Country

By Joshua Rothkopf

The typical complaint goes something like this: Why open a huge, gleaming multiplex if three of those screens are going to be devoted to a single "prestige" picture—*Seabiscuit*, say

The 28th Toronto International Film Festival
4 – 13 September

—and the rest to wannabe contenders of even lesser ambition? Happy exceptions aside, I fully sympathize. New waves of cinema have come and gone, from countries we should be learning more about (at least before we start bombing them), but rarely have we heard those foreign voices on the vast majority of American movie screens. In this regard, film festivals are an oasis—providing an uncommon field of choice apart from the harsh calculations of the marketplace.

The Toronto International Film Festival, a showcase for 254 new features over a 10-day period, is arguably the most significant and rewarding in the world. Unlike the ultra-exclusive Cannes, open only to industry people and the press, Toronto can be attended by the public—and it is, in droves. And while Sundance has become a feeding frenzy for Indie products that are slicker and less spirited by the year, Toronto boasts a global breadth and vitality that shows no sign of sagging.

Documentaries, especially, suffer in a theatrical distribution system that is ever mindful of the bottom line. But it was difficult to underrate the superb slate at Toronto, cohering in a fiercely political and decidedly leftist vein. *The Corporation*, an audience favorite, is a landmark two-and-a-half hour excoriation of the titular subject. Co-directors Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, whose skills have improved considerably

since their well-intentioned but undeniably dull take on *Manufacturing Consent*, propose a witty thesis (taken from an extensive study by Joel Bakan): If corporations can legally claim the rights and protections of a person—a status successfully extracted from laws intended for freed slaves—then they can be psychoanalyzed as people. Their prognosis, wittily embellished by cheeky corporate training films from the '50s as well as harrowing footage of oil spills and birth defects, is total pathological psychosis. Building its indictment carefully, with well-chosen interviews from *In These Times* contributors Naomi Klein, Howard Zinn and others, *The Corporation* may leave you in a rage.

In the wake of such a definitive blow, other offerings on the subject of globalization seemed breezier, though their potshots were no less welcome. hilariously, *The Yes Men* follows a subversive group of well-organized activists posing as guest speakers from the World Trade Organization infiltrating unsuspecting conferences and televised roundtables. Unimaginably, solemn presentations are made by the bogus execs on the merits of re-legalizing slavery in which the audience nods uncertainly. *Game Over: Kasparov and the Machine*, about the controversy surrounding the chess champion's infamous loss to IBM's Deep Blue, suffers for its tidy reduction of the conflict to man-vs.-monolith romanticism; it does, how-

ever, work surprisingly well as a paranoid thriller, complete with screeching tires and telephoto lenses peeking out of the slate-gray windows of office buildings.

Political history was well-served by several Toronto docs probing into the recent and distant past, most notably Rithy Panh's groundbreaking *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*. Through the chillingly blank participation of a handful of prison guards, eerily re-enacting their daily routines in the echoing corridors of one of Cambodia's most notorious death camps, Pahn arrives at a coolly devastating picture of a regime that claimed more than 2 million lives. "I never saw them as human beings," says one guard. *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* has the delirious payoff of an expertly calibrated action movie—as does its subject, the weekend-long Venezuelan coup that briefly threw the nation into political chaos before the popularly elected Chávez was returned to power. Gifted with uncanny fortune that documentarians can only pray for (the camera crew was trapped inside the presidential palace as it fell under siege), the film packs an enormous amount of information in a riveting 74 minutes, including a sharp analysis of the media manipulation that brought angry citizens to the brink of class warfare. (The instigating Bush White House is not spared.)

Easily the documentary event of the festival was Errol Morris' mesmerizing por-

LEFT: Jørgen Leth in *The Five Obstructions*;
MIDDLE: *The Corporation*;
RIGHT: Journalist Adam Penenberg from
Shattered Glass.





VAN NATH / INA

Rithy Panh's *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*

central performance of young Hayden Christensen, hiding cagily behind horn-rimmed glasses in boring columns of text. (The office receptionist gets the best line in the movie, a one-word riposte that cuts right to the magazine's chief deficiency, one that might have prevented the whole scandal: "Pictures.")

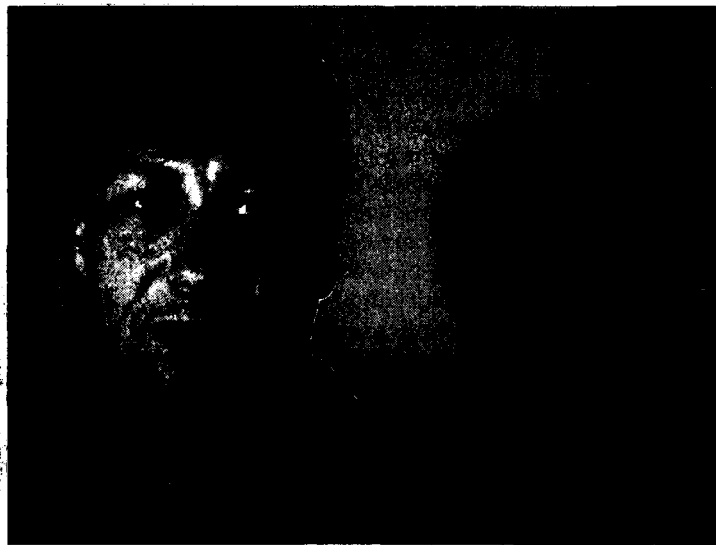
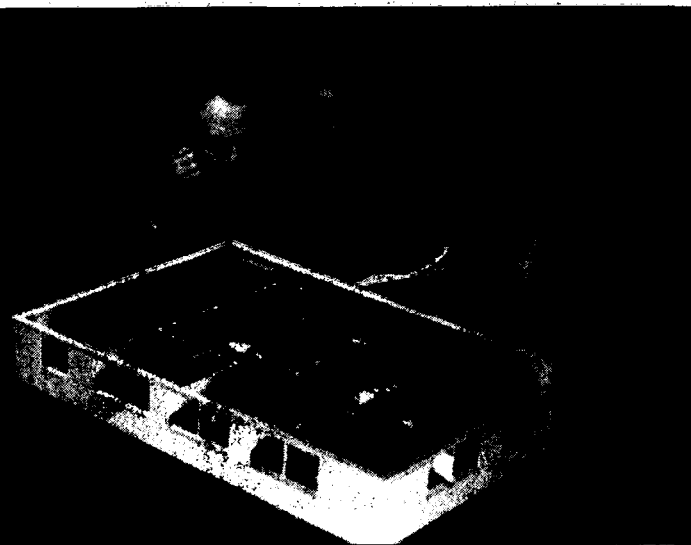
With the real world providing the focus for so many of the festival's best efforts, films that depended on abstraction and artifice suffered by comparison. Tsai Ming-liang's stultifying *Good Bye, Dragon Inn* captures none of the magic of film despite being set in a movie palace on its final day of operations. Meg Ryan is desperately, unpersuasively naked in Jane Campion's ludicrous erotic thriller, *In The Cut*, while even Guy Maddin, Canada's homegrown David Lynch, stumbled with his gorgeous but inconsequential comedy, *The Saddest Music In The World*.

The keen observations of intimately contained dramas landed on surer ground. Case in point: two fine character studies, Sofia Coppola's hotly anticipated *Lost In Translation*, and *Dallas 362*, a frighteningly assured first film by 27-year old Scott Caan (yes, son of James). Both movies boast more than their directors' ability to trace a lineage to *The Godfather*: a careful ear for unassuming dialogue and equally expressive silences, career-topping performances by two comic masters (Bill Murray and Jeff Goldblum, respectively), and a choking sense of dislocation. *Translation*, already in theaters, was met

trait of former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, *The Fog of War*. (Underlining his film's parallels to current events in a seething Q&A after the show, Morris sarcastically spat, "We're doing a great job!") For all the intelligence and hindsight McNamara brings to the historical record—the film admirably accommodates his phone conversation with Kennedy advocating the swift removal of troops in Vietnam and his own admissions of misreading the threat of Communist China under LBJ—the 87-year-old remains a mystery, unable (or unwilling) to articulate the palpable sense of guilt surrounding him. Morris refuses to push his subject to the answers he wants to hear, taking his cue from the 11 "lessons" McNamara offers as a narrative strand

(e.g. "Empathize with your enemy"). Eventually, the lessons recede as mere equivocations, leaving behind the efficiency expert, trapped by hawks and doves alike, still running the numbers on his moment in time.

Speaking of slippery people, Stephen Glass, the fabricating scoop-hound who nearly sank the *New Republic's* credibility with a string of phony articles and sources, has inspired a great docudrama, *Shattered Glass*, a bona fide journalistic thriller in the vein of *All the President's Men*. What Billy Ray's confident debut lacks in situational dramatics (how thrilling can the passive-aggressive tantrums of publisher Marty Peretz really be?), it more than makes up for in the



with a sigh of relief, its pretty images of Tokyo and oddball intergenerational friendship coalescing into something unexpectedly moving (validating that Coppola hadn't merely been lucky with *The Virgin Suicides*). But *Dallas 362* sparked that rarer thrill of prodigious discovery. In many ways the superior film, it ambitiously makes whole a broken home of headstrong Los Angeles transplants, a mother and son from Texas, while revealing in some of the punchiest trash-talk to grace a film in years.

Mystifyingly, *Dallas 362* left Toronto without a distributor, making the egalitarian value of such a festival painfully apparent. (If the audience's rollicking response was any indication, this should soon be corrected.)

Much the same could be said of another pair of movies, both from Danish provocateur Lars von Trier. *Dogville*, his three-hour slice of anti-Americana and a follow-up to *Dancer in the Dark*, is all but assured a domestic release. It stars Nicole Kidman (in the role of the dog, for those familiar with von Trier's arty brand of misogyny), and presents its Depression-era morality play on an arid stage set marked with imaginary walls and shrubs. *Dogville's* tongue-clucking point—and von Trier makes it broadly—is the hypocrisy of the Good Samaritan, but a less clinical film could have done so more powerfully.

But von Trier's antic documentary *The Five Obstructions*, which still lacks a distributor but is far more deserving, comically reveals the Dogmatist at his torturous worst while tapping into appealing depths of insecurity he's never allowed himself. What begins as an intellectual's game—von Trier proposing to his friend and fellow filmmaker, Jørgen Leth, that he remake a short film five times, each with certain prescribed aesthetic limitations that are too deliciously cruel to reveal here—ends up a deep meditation on the nature of art, authorship and the camaraderie that comes out of good-natured competition. Leth, dignified and graying, meets each challenge with smiling patience; with each assignment (the resulting films are terrific), he appears to shed years while his taskmaster fumes, obviously impressed. The final obstruction is von Trier himself, authoring a confession that feels like a formal abandonment of

his severe manifestos for the uncertainties of the soul—a true breakthrough.

I spent the morning of September 11 chuckling at the droll, tablebound arguments of Jim Jarmusch's hyper-concentrated *Coffee and Cigarettes*, one of two stylish exceptions that proved the prevailing rule of realism, along with *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter ... and Spring*, perhaps the most beautifully realized film of the festival. Its South Korean director and writer, Kim Ki-duk, is not known for

elegant cycles of seasonal death and rebirth, shot through with deeply felt Buddhist leanings and a surfeit of spryly symbolic animals—his last movie was about a killer coast guard officer—but made one he has. The corporate gods of distribution have smiled upon Kim Ki-duk; his film is scheduled for an American release in the spring. But for the movies that aren't, as Toronto 2003 demonstrated so thoroughly, there are often ways to get around those gods. ■

EVENTS



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